

Foundations of Character - Developing Character and Values in the Early Years

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Developing Character and Values in the Early Years

Foundations of Character

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**UNIVERSITY OF
BIRMINGHAM**



Foreword

This is the last of the five reports on the values of children and students including graduates in their first years of employment, covering the ages 3-25. It represents the most complete empirical enquiry ever conducted in England into their values, attitudes and dispositions. This report on the Early Years covers the ages 3-6: it draws on careful observation, including evidence from carers, teachers and parents.

It is commonly assumed that the influences on the early years of a child's life are determinative for the future individual: the evidence in this report suggests that the situation is more complex. It is true that the home and the professional environment are of the utmost importance, but children themselves take initiatives and explore their own experience through story and play which inform their growing self-awareness, knowledge of other people and sense of responsibility.

As with other areas of education, early intervention and positive example seem to be crucial ingredients in developing a child's values.

Nothing is more important for the future well-being of our society than this dimension of education.

Lord Watson of Richmond CBE

Chairman of 'Learning for Life'

High Steward of the University of Cambridge

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Developing Character and Values

Early Years

Summary

Foundations of Character explores the developing dispositions, attitudes and values of a sample of children between the ages of 3 and 6 years. These children were observed in their homes, as well as in early childhood education contexts, in urban London and rural Kent, predominantly six nursery settings. The children were first observed when they were between 36 and 48 months old and then tracked over a nineteen month period between June 2008 and December 2009. A total of 86 day-long visits provided rich observation evidence for the study and this confirmed a close connection between the emergence of moral awareness and social and emotional development. The narratives presented demonstrate the complex moral decisions they face and the range of strategies they employ to deal with them.

The views of parents and carers were surveyed with regard to what they seek to teach or model by way of behaviour and their views about the role and purposes of early childhood education in this respect.

The theme of 'sharing' holds together many of the observed behaviours because it points to ways in which children are trying to come to terms with themselves and their needs in relation to others. The way children negotiate with one another indicates that they are aware of moral complexities and have a sense of one another as well as of themselves. This may not lend itself to analysis within a cognitive frame and the children may not have the language in which to conceptualise it, at such a young age, but the evidence suggests that exploration and testing are elements in their moral maturation. Parents and carers have much to work with, as by example and through questioning, they assist the children in their care to give voice to their values. It is interesting that practitioners thought the main purpose of early childhood education was 'to allow children to meet other children' and 'to help children to become more independent.' Both parents and carers agreed that the primary influence on a child's values came from parents and siblings.

Key Findings

The children's varied and complex interactions demonstrated that they:

- were kind and considerate.
- showed understanding of what it was to be involved with others.
- were capable of taking control, or trying to dominate when co-operating.
- usually manifested honesty and fairness in the way they treated others.
- evinced subtlety and flexibility when dealing with others, facing up to issues and finding ways round them.
- frequently used humour in ways which transformed situations.
- took opportunities to positively encourage others.
- used several approaches when wanting to control things and get their own way. Hurtful words, strategic deception and from time to time manipulation were employed.

A key relationship for understanding the emerging moral sensitivity of children turns out to be 'sharing'. Ownership is a powerful dimension of a child's experience; the behaviours and language which enlarge a child's understanding of it, so that the child is able to offer and receive 'gifts' are complex but illuminating.

The parents' and professionals' perspectives:

- Parents and practitioners were agreed that a good person is respectful, kind, honest and caring.
- Commenting on their child's characteristics, parents most commonly said that their children were happy, caring, curious, kind, funny, helpful, and polite.
- Practitioners agreed with parents comments on children's characteristics but were more likely also to say the children were responsible.
- Parents were less confident about their child's sharing though few said they were selfish.
- Parents wanted their children as adults to be happy, caring, honest, kind, respectful, responsible, confident, well-educated and hard-working.
- There was some disagreement about character-development, but most agreed that a child's character changed over time, is largely influenced by parents but contributed to by the experience of school.

There is some evidence that location influences the opinions of parents and practitioners about character and character development, although this research does not have the evidence to show why or how.

- For example, parents with children at a Montessori School in London were more likely than parents elsewhere to say that their children were selfish and that they sent their children to nursery to learn to read and write.
- Parents in Kent were less likely than London parents to say their children were naughty, or that they would be likely to be religious in future.
- Kent parents were rather less positive than London parents about their children's sharing behaviour and their children being independent and co-operative; or that their children would be successful and well-educated as adults.
- London parents were more inclined than Kent parents to agree that their children went to school so that they could go out to work.
- Kent parents more likely than London parents to say that their children went to school to meet other children and become more confident. Interestingly, it appears that they were more likely to agree that they would talk to their child about others' feelings.

Professionals said that they tried to set good examples, explained right and wrong to a child, praise children when they behave well, and would talk to a child about others' feelings.

1. Introduction

Learning for Life is a major research project, largely funded by the John Templeton Foundation and Porticus UK. It is an ambitious and groundbreaking initiative with few parallels in the UK. Indeed, there has not yet been a coherent exploration of character development that studies all educational age groups and on into employment. Within the overall project, *Learning for Life*, this is one of five separate studies; (a) a character perspective in the early years; (b) consistency in values in the transition from primary to secondary school; (c) the values and character dispositions of 14-16 year olds; (d) the formation of virtues and dispositions in the 16-19 age range; and (e) values in higher education and employment. The research focuses on the age range 3 to 25 years, which makes the scope and the approach unique. The five studies constitute the empirical background to a final report, which will focus on Character Development, an often neglected but essential dimension of all sound education.

The overall sample involves tracking more than 4,000 children and young people, 300 parents and 100 teachers over a two-year period in Birmingham, Bristol, Canterbury, rural Kent and London. In addition, the sample contains in-depth interviews with 85 undergraduates and 65 graduate employees together with a series of group interviews and case study observations. Additional case studies of particular issues have also been undertaken. Each project has had a dedicated full-time research fellow working over a two to three year period.

This particular study has explored character development in early childhood, particularly focussing on 24 children aged 3 to 6 years; their parents'¹, professional carers' and teachers' understandings of character formation in the early years; and these adults' beliefs about factors that influence its development. This introductory section of the report locates the study within a socio-cultural-historical framework (Rogoff, 2003, p.50). This begins with a summary of current early years education policy and its potential for shaping the pedagogies of practitioners² and the ethos of early years settings in England. There follows a concise review of salient findings from previous research into the formation of character and development of values in

¹ We have generally used the term 'parents' throughout this report to refer to the adults who are the children's primary carers. Where a child's primary carer is someone other than a parent, the relationship is explained in the text.

² The term 'practitioner' has been used to describe the staff that worked in the ECE settings in this study, although they included qualified teachers, nursery managers, nursery nurses, administrators etc.

young children³. This review pinpoints three influential factors in these areas of development: the pioneers of early education whose imprint remains in many settings in England today and subsequently may impact on the roles and attitudes of the second influential factor, the early years practitioners. Thirdly, the discussion turns to the role of families, particularly parents, based on evidence from previous research.

1.1 Character and Values in the Education Arena

A large number of concepts arise in this project: values, morality, virtues, duties, and principles. However, there is no consensus either on the meaning of these words or on how these should be fitted into a single system of thought. Moreover, there is little agreement on how education does or should impact on these concepts.

After preliminary discussions, the following propositions were adopted as a starting point:

- First, there is such a thing as character, an interlocked set of personal values and virtues that normally guide conduct. Character is about who we are and who we become and includes, amongst other things, the virtues of responsibility, honesty, self-reliance, reliability, generosity, self-discipline, and a sense of identity and purpose.
- Secondly, there is no fixed set of values, easily measured or incapable of modification.
- Thirdly, choices about conduct are selections about 'right' or 'wrong' actions and thoughts.
- Fourthly, character does not develop within a vacuum; in order to develop as a person an individual needs to grow up within a culture, and the richer the culture, the more mature a person he or she has a chance of becoming.
- Fifthly, education is concerned with active character development, not simply the acquisition of academic and social skills.
- Lastly, at a conceptual level it is important to distinguish between the qualities of character that define virtue from other qualities of the self and/or person which we are more inclined to associate with such notions as personality.

Education is about active character development, not an exclusive process about the acquisition of academic and social skills. It is ultimately about the kind of person a student becomes and wants to become and this includes the moral, spiritual and religious dimensions of life (Arthur, 2003, p.3).

³ For a review of character education see Arthur, J and Deakin-Crick, R et al (2006).

The tradition of virtue language has been eroded, and as a result, an impoverished discourse on character has contributed to a lack of coherence in the rationale of the educational system. There is a lack of clarity in the moral objectives that schools set themselves, especially in the area of personal responsibility. Practice in this area is rarely evaluated. Government initiatives to enhance character education remain patchy, narrowly focused and marginal rather than brought into mainstream provision. There is little support or training for teachers. Socially excluded groups of young people are least likely to be involved in character development initiatives such as volunteering. Moreover, while employers repeatedly call attention to lack of skills and relevant knowledge in their new employees, they also point to the missing dimension of personal 'character'.

Schools and the wider educational systems are subject to an understandable pressure to provide the economy with functionally competent persons equipped to meet the increasingly competitive demands of employment. In doing so schools may ignore or take for granted another important dimension of education – the encouragement into critical self-consciousness of the process by which a student learns to become aware of himself or herself as a responsible person.

All dimensions of education are essential if pupils and young people are to assume their role in society equipped with the personal qualities, dispositions, attitudes, values and virtues to take responsibility for themselves and to contribute to the common good. Good habits encouraged during the process of education underpin the ability and inclination to engage in the necessary business of further lifelong personal development and learning.

For a short literature review of the origins of character education the reader should consult the previous report - Character Education: The Formation of Virtues and Dispositions in 16-19 Year Olds with particular reference to the religious and spiritual (www.learningforlife.org.uk).

1.2 Learning for Life in Early Years Settings - The Policy Context in England

Previous research suggests that a range of factors may shape young children's development and Bronfenbrenner theorises that these are structured within a dynamic bio-ecological model (1979, 1994, 1998). Allowing for explorations within contexts where children engage in a variety of social interactions, this study of children's character development and values included observations in the homes,

early years settings (e.g. nursery) and primary schools of 24 children aged 3-6 years over nineteen months, beginning in May 2008.

In 2009 the UK-based charity, The Children's Society, published the findings of a large-scale enquiry into what constitutes "A Good Childhood" in contemporary British society, and noted that many children in Britain were not able to develop within a positive environment. Reporting the study's main findings, Layard and Dunn (2009) concluded that children's lives have become more difficult than they were in the past. They linked this issue to excessive individualism, which produced family discord and conflict; more pressure to own things; excessive competition in schools; and unacceptable income inequality. The authors of the Report observed that excessive individualism needs to be replaced by a value system where people seek satisfaction more from helping others, rather than pursuing private advantage. The value systems espoused in a society have also come under comparative scrutiny in the World Values Survey (WVS), exploring the aspirations and beliefs of people in 97 participating countries. The President of the international WVS network has asserted that the survey's evidence shows how, 'people's beliefs play a key role in economic development, the emergence and flourishing of democratic institutions, the rise of gender equality, and the extent to which societies have effective government' (World Values Survey, 2009, p.2).

Dahlberg, Moss and Pence (1999) have proposed that early years settings can be transformed into contexts for mutual engagement in critical democracy within a civil society, but that this can only be achieved where the key questions about their existence and purposes have been considered, debated and made evident. But, there is little doubt that children's exposure to and engagement in early childhood education (ECE) is currently a widespread phenomenon in England. The Office of National Statistics (2009) reports that 92% of three-year-olds and 98% of four-year-olds are 'benefiting from some free early years education' which may be up to 15 hours per week (DCSF, 2010, p.1). In the year they turn 5, most progress full-time into (fee-free) primary school reception classes, in state-funded schools.

The provision of the Entitlement to early education funding has been a lever for the introduction, in 2008, of the *Early Years Foundation Stage* (EYFS) which provides a *Statutory Framework* (DfES, 2007) for early education for babies and children from birth to five years under the broad policy auspices of the *Every Child Matters* agenda (DfES, 2004). It is now a little over a decade since Dahlberg et al (1999) asserted the potential role of early years settings in civic society, and since Moss (1999)

subsequently asserted that early childhood institutions are not, by default, civic forums but have the potential to become (ibid, p.150). Policy documents make clear the governance and inspection priorities and arrangements for early years education, but there remains an extant contradiction and dichotomy as to the purposes of early childhood and the institutions that fulfil early education functions. This in turn implicates practitioners in roles that are underpinned by potentially confusing principles and rationales for their day-to-day work and professional identities (Powell, 2010).

The EYFS Statutory Framework 'sets the standards for learning, development and care for children from 0–5 years' and its aims include 'laying a secure foundation for future learning' (DfES, 2007, p.7).

Comparing the drivers for early childhood education and care provision in 20 OECD countries (see OECD, 2001 and 2006), Bennett asserts that the UK has 'an employment oriented, social policy approach that emphasises 'family-friendly' policies that can help parents balance work and family responsibilities' (2001, p.3), and that UK approaches tend to emphasise the development of readiness for school and the foundations for later academic attainment. This contrasts with countries that adopt a social pedagogy tradition, such as Denmark, where ECEC programmes have emphasised the 'free and creative development of the child in a social context' (OECD, 2006, p.136). The *EYFS Statutory Framework* has attracted some criticism as representative of a 'drilling down' of formal early learning to the very youngest children and an 'overly formal, academic and/or cognitively biased 'curriculum' (Open Eye, 2007).

The EYFS is underpinned by 'core principles', which translate into its four principal themes:

1. A unique child – every child is a competent learner from birth who can be resilient, capable and self assured
2. Positive relationships – children learn to be strong and independent from a base of loving and secure relationships with parents/carers
3. Enabling environments – the environment plays a key role in supporting a child's development
4. Learning and development – children learn and develop in different ways and at different rates. All areas of learning are equally important and interconnected (DCSF, 2008, p.5)

The *Statutory Framework* encourages providers to ensure that the learning experiences are 'tailored to...individual needs' (ibid, p.37) and encompasses a

balance of adult-led and child-initiated activities with play as the medium for delivery. The learning experiences, which are monitored against a series of 13 assessment scales, are intended to cover six broad learning and development areas:

- Personal, Social and Emotional Development
- Communication, Language and Literacy
- Problem Solving, Reasoning and Numeracy
- Knowledge and Understanding of the World
- Physical Development
- Creative Development

Under the aegis of the *Every Child Matters* agenda, the EYFS promotes each child's uniqueness and the importance of fostering individual interests. It is interesting to note, therefore, that the Early Learning Goals for social and emotional development have generic expectations for 'most children' to evidence specific understandings and behaviours by the end of the EYFS (age 5 years); and to recognise that there is a combination of ideals seemingly intended to support and record the development of both independent and cooperative values and behaviours in young children. As stated by David (1999), 'research indicates that young children will live "up or down" to societal and family expectations...so the curriculum we decide on for young children...may have crucial long term consequences for our society. *We have to decide what kind of people we want our children to be and to become*' (p.83, our italics). Although the EYFS is explicit in promoting the values of diversity, individuality and inclusion, there is an overall lack of clarity about values in ECEC (Powell, 2010).

1.3 Character Development in the Early Years – An Overview of Research

Garfinkle (1998) emphasises that character formation begins long before a child starts her/his school life and the learning in early childhood years lays the crucial groundwork for later character development. Researchers assert that a moral awareness emerges when children are very young (in their second year) and understandings of moral issues underpin young children's personal and social development (Kagan and Lamb, 1990), although others suggest that this is dependent upon an individual's 'temperamental effortful control' (Cacciopo et al., 2007: P.421). Some studies have also explored the manifestations of behaviour, for example sharing (Rheingold et al., 1976; Hay et al., 1991), cooperating (Rheingold, 1982), and sympathy (Hoffman, 1975; Dunn & Brown, 1991; Zahn-Waxler, 1992). Eliot (1999) explains how research on newborn babies' capacity for imitation demonstrates immediate attunement to emotional learning and the importance of

imitation for the development of empathy. Gopnik (2009) reveals how very young children's behaviour can show sophisticated understandings of social rules and conventions and of the feelings of others. She avers that some behaviours of children as young as fourteen months go beyond empathy and can be 'genuinely altruistic' (p.212).

The studies of 'theory of mind' suggest that young children are able to understand the inner experiences of others, including the recognition of others' perceptions, knowledge, desires, intentions, and emotions (Meltzoff, Gopnik & Repacholi, 1999). Around the age of eighteen months, these understandings may become apparent and continue to develop in their pre-school years (Astington & Gopnik, 1991). Although studies have suggested limitations of these theories of mind (Wimmer and Perner, 1983), the data showing that young children do have theories about the minds, beliefs, and desires of other people is still strong (Gopnik, 1999). The implication of young children having a theory of mind helps to widen the scope of studies in early years development to concerns with their moral character. In particular, knowledge about and of emotions of themselves and others are fundamental for young children to interpret others' emotional states and needs in relation to the manifestations' of cooperation, empathy and prosocial responses (Eisenberg & Fabes, 1998). It demonstrates that young children are not hopelessly egocentric (as Piaget envisaged in 1932) and merely the receivers of rules and regulations imposed by authorities. Researchers have begun to study, for example, young children's understanding of intentionality and moral judgement (Leslie et al., 2006), friendship and moral awareness (Peterson & Siegal, 2002), and cognitive and social development (Dunn, 1996).

However, many studies stem from psycho-biological studies under experimental conditions, e.g. Birch & Billman (1986) and Stewart & McBride-Chang (2000). These findings were less likely to evidence young children's developing character in everyday contexts or explore how they construct their understandings of the aspects of character. Other studies have attempted to offer accounts of young children's formation of moral understandings from their real life experiences. For example, drawing from the work of Vygotsky and Bahktin, Edmiston (2008) highlights the possibilities in children's play for exploring and adopting different) ethical personae Through exchanges with and observations of his own son over several years Edmiston reveals a young child deeply 'engaged in exploring complex ethical situations – perspective taking and authorizing understanding and identity' (ibid, p.ix).

On the whole, very young children's social worlds are largely confined to the family sphere. They learn their very early social behaviour in the family context. A warm and sensitive with limit-setting parenting provides an opportunity for both parents and a child to engage in two-way moral interactions (Garfinkle, 1998). Dunn's work (1988) with families which had young children aged between 12 and 36 months reveals how young children can practice their power of social intelligence in daily family life. However, when young children begin to take part in different social contexts, for example at the playground, in day care settings, or later in schools, they soon include young peers in their social sphere. In addition, the authority from the social contexts outside of the family, for instance, staff in early years settings, and environment of those settings become part of young children's social universe. By expanding experiences in these social interactions, young children gradually explore ideas, rules, and norms, in which moral issues, social conventions and personal matters are situated.

This study has sought to bridge the gap between different interpretive stances, by recording young children's behaviours and narratives within the context of familiar environments and social interactions. Research specifically exploring the effects of these social interactions on young children's moral development and character formation is limited but highlights three influential factors: parents and carers, early childhood education and teachers, and peer relations, which previous studies have posited as factors that shape young children's development.

A. Families

Parents or carers are a primary agent in influencing young children's socialization, which serves as an important medium for their moral development and character formation. Current research has examined developmental mechanisms that link early parenting and future conscience. Conscience is a complex system encompassing moral emotions, conduct, cognition and self. The early occurrence of conscience may serve as a robust factor for children's later moral decisions and actions. In a six-year longitudinal study, Kochanska and her colleagues (2008) followed 102 mother-child dyads at their home and in the laboratory to explore early conscience development. They found that a mother's responsiveness to her child in infancy was a predictor of the subsequent responsiveness of the child as a toddler and multiple aspects of the child's conscience at preschool age.

When Spinrad et al. (1999) observed parental affect and encouragement with 216 children's, with a mean age of 73 months, they found that parental practices involving emotion contribute to children's moral development. Gopnik (2009) and Elliott (1999) have asserted that the very earliest interactions experienced by babies are important for their journeys in emotional learning. Dunn et al. (1991) also researched 50 young children's understanding of others' feelings and their ability to explain human action in terms of beliefs. The authors suggest that the growth of social understanding is shaped not only by the child's own interactions, but also by the relationships of other family members around him or her. The suggestion that modelled relationship behaviours are important for children's social understandings and development was also observed in Lubeck's study (1986) of different ethnic groups in American early childhood education settings.

Many of these studies were conducted within English speaking groups. The parental values and child rearing styles have seldom been examined in relation to multi-cultural contexts (Lubeck, 1986, is an exception). In an investigation of four ethnic groups (American, European American, African American and Asian American), including 310 parents of preschool children, Suizzo et al. (2008) identified that three belief constructs (conformity, autonomy and prosocial) were held by the parents from different ethnic groups. Murray Andrews (2005), documenting the intimate and subtle relationships between very young children and their parents or other close carers, report that, 'In...small ways, daily, repeated routines accumulate to build up the baby's sense of a predictable, familiar world that embeds her firmly in the particular culture of her own family' (p.63). However, more studies are needed to explore cultural and multi-cultural influences on young children's moral character.

B. Early childhood education: Settings and professionals

Early childhood education has been considered to play a critical role in the formation of children's moral and social values (Sylva, et al., 2004). Particularly, while some studies document that even very young children can distinguish between matters of morality and social convention (Nucci, 2008), it is necessary for early childhood educators to consider how aspects of the environment and practices in a setting may contribute to the social experience associated with the development of children's moral and conventional understandings.

A number of enduring ECE philosophies, approaches and developmental theories have shaped the environments and pedagogies found within ECE settings to this day and the legacies of some (or combinations of these) were traceable in the six settings

in which this Learning for Life study was largely located. Some influences originated in the UK (e.g. Robert Owen, Margaret and Rachel McMillan, Susan Issacs) and others were drawn from international sources (including Rousseau, Pestalozzi, Froebel, Freud, Dewey, Steiner, Montessori, Piaget, Vygotsky, Skinner, Bowlby and Bruner). Historically, the influence can be traced to scholars such as Comenius in the 17th century but also include modern day theorists and educators such as David Weikart, responsible for High/Scope, USA and Loris Malaguzzi in Italy (Pound, 2005). Examples of their influence can be seen in nurseries and other settings today. Maria Montessori, for example, emphasised learning for real life through the fine-tuning of a child's cognitive skills. This is achieved through the provision of graded and structured tasks for the purpose of self-initiated learning with little scope for creativity (Sayeed and Guerin, 2000). Montessori viewed pretend and socio-dramatic play as primitive and escapist rather than promoting real learning for life. Steiner, however, proposed that education should be designed to meet the changing needs of a child, that it should help a child to fulfil his or her full potential but he did not believe in pushing children towards goals that adults, or society in general, believed to be desirable (Trostli, 1998). Perhaps most importantly for this study, Steiner also sought, 'to bridge the deep chasm between the worlds of inner and outer perception, between the conceptual framework of the sciences, philosophy, and the doctrines of religion.' (Moore, 1997, p.2)

However, the mainstream thought in early childhood education in the UK, following the Plowden Report (DES, 1967), was to consolidate the view that childhood is important in itself and not simply a preparation for adulthood. This view has been supported and extended by those who advocated a new sociology of childhood e.g. Qvortrup, (1993); Mayall, (1994); Alderson, (1995); James, et al. (1998), and for giving children a voice and actively involving them in democratic decision-making (e.g. Clarke et al., 2005). This places a child at the centre of studies and recognises children's competence and agency both in shaping social worlds and in contributing their views that hitherto had tended to be viewed as the prerogative of adults, particularly parents.

Other educators' views, e.g. Margaret McMillan, valuing education as having a remediating function for the child are taken into account (Sayeed and Guerin, 2000). McMillan considered play as having a significant place in early childhood education. She emphasised using play as a medium for skill development and experimentation insisting on the importance of indoor and outdoor play areas. These principles and ideas have been accepted as prerequisites for Early Years play provision in the UK.

Many professionals regard play as essential to young children's social, emotional and cognitive development (Moyle, 2005; David et al., 2003).

Many studies have particularly explored child and caregiver interactions and recorded children's experience e.g. Howes, (1983), Clarke-Stewart, (1987), and Phillips et al., (1987). These studies proposed that high quality child care involved supportive interactions with caregivers, positive peer interactions, and opportunities for cognitively stimulating play (see also Evangelou et al, 2009; Dahlberg et al, 1999). Among these, however, little empirical research has been conducted to examine the contextual influence from professionals' or caregivers' behaviours and implicit or explicit socialization with particular reference to young children's moral character development. In a longitudinal investigation of 3000 preschool children (part of the EPPE - Effective Provision of Pre-School Education - project), Sylva et al., (2004) found that participation in effective pre-school provision was important for young children in their cognitive development and aspects of social behaviour, e.g. independence, concentration, cooperation, conformity and relationships with other children (peer sociability). Vandell (2004) also reviewed many studies recorded in the National Institute of Child Health and Development (NICHD) database and suggested that children who had close relationships with their caregivers at age four were reported by schoolteachers to be more sociable.

As a whole, the ethos within nurseries or preschools is also important for young children's moral development and character formation. Scholars have used different terms to describe ethos, for example, moral climate (Noddings 2008), moral atmosphere (Power, et al. 1989), and sociomoral atmosphere (DeVries et al., 1994). A caring, trustworthy and interactive environment may explicitly and implicitly promote young children's moral behaviours and help to shape their moral characters.

C. Young Children's Peers and Friends

As Dunn (2004: p.3) suggests, 'friends matter to children...even in the years before school'. The development of friendships facilitates a child's moral understanding and provides the opportunities to behave in a prosocial way. Rogers and Evens (2006), in a study of young children's role-play, have also observed that the need to be with their friends sometimes takes precedence over the play itself.

In early childhood, peers/friends that play an essential role in the development of young children's socialization and early experiences in this respect are also believed to contribute to an individual's long-term adjustment (Ladd, 1999). Poor peer relations during childhood have been consistently implicated in the etiology of later deviance. In a review on peer relations in childhood, Hay et al. (2004) explored peer relations originating from the first year of life. Their developmental model observed a newborn beginning to cry when (s)he heard another child crying, and later smiling at, and trying to reach toward and touch other infants. Trevarthen's work also provided significant contributions to understanding the social drive and intersubjectivity of human infants (1979, 1998). Importantly, this theoretical position posits that very young children are actively co-constructing their social worlds, which Trevarthen and Aitken (2001, p.3) describe as 'Mutual self-other-consciousness [which] is found to play the lead role in developing a child's cooperative intelligence for cultural learning and language.'

In order to understand young children's friendships and moral awareness, Peterson and Siegal (2002) studied a sample of 109 preschoolers aged 3-5 years. They used sociometric measures to screen the children into 'popular' and 'rejected' groups. The results presented, on the one hand, that 'rejected' children with stable mutual friendship scored higher on measures of moral understanding and theory of mind than the 'rejected' children without such friendships. On the other hand, the 'popular' children with stable mutual friendship outperformed other popular children on 'mindreading' but no better in moral understanding. They then concluded that peer popularity was a more significant independent predictor of children's moral understanding than other factors such as verbal maturity and age.

In briefly reviewing the policy and research literature, this Section has endeavoured to 'set a scene' for this study of the development of character and values in the early years. The next section explains the study's methodology, including the tools and techniques employed for data collection and analysis, while acknowledging a socio-cultural-historical and political framework has shaped the study's design.

2. Study Design and Methods

This section outlines the design of the research including the sampling strategy and sample features. It also describes and provides a rationale for the methodology and the methods used to collect and analyse the data.

This study aimed to explore, with a view to better understanding, the developing dispositions, values and attitudes of a sample of young children in the familiar contexts of their homes, early education settings, and primary schools. This exploration, it was hoped, would also provide insights into the values of the significant adults in these children's lives and these adults' views about the development of character and values.

The study began with the following, overarching research questions:

- What are the young children's understandings of character, values and morality?
- What examples of morality and values are exhibited through the play, narratives and interactions of the young children?
- What are the understandings of these children's significant adults (staff in early years settings and primary schools; and family members) about character and the development of morality and values in the early years?
- What do these professionals and parents believe to be the significant influences on young children's character development?
- What are the implications for professionals and teachers of the findings from all of the above research questions and for the introduction of character education programmes?

2.1 Research Design

People's values, virtues, dispositions, and attitudes can be explored in a number of ways. They are traceable by analyzing documents (Van Brummelen, 1994), by observing behaviour in real life setting (Dunn and Brown, 1991) or laboratories (Hay, et al., 1991), by asking people questions, e.g. scenario interviews (Kohlberg, 1984) , or by a wide range survey, e.g. European values study (Halman, 2001). All these approaches have their advantages and disadvantages. As this study aimed to explore young children's moral character formation and development, and the potentially wide-ranging factors that appear influential to these, a single method approach was

deemed inadequate for answering the study's research questions. Therefore, a multi-site case study approach was designed.

The conceptual framework, which guided the case study design, was potentially problematic. The Learning for Life project as a whole employed a grounded theory approach (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). However, there have been criticisms of this method (e.g. Bryman, 1988; Bryman and Burgess, 1994). Aull Davies (1999) pinpoints the criticisms to a 'naïve assumption that data can initially be interrogated from a theoretically neutral position, as well as for not allowing sufficient development of more interpretative forms of analysis...keeping the emphasis on substantive as opposed to formal theory.' Attempts have been made in this early years study to address such criticisms by stating the theories that steered the contextualisation of the research and the development of the study's sample and methods (see Introduction) as well as processes designed to encourage the ongoing reflexivity of the research team. This section and the subsequent reporting of findings also endeavour to make transparent the interrelated and cumulative methods used for the construction and reconstruction of research instruments and analytical and interpretative techniques.

2.2 Sampling Strategy

The sampling strategy was founded on the premise that the study's main sources of evidence would be young children and significant adults in their lives. The study's design recognises the significant educational and developmental functions that families fulfil and the opportunities they could provide for explorations of character and values in different contexts. Bronfenbrenner (1979) described these contexts as a child's 'microsystems' and the interplay between them as the 'mesosystem'.

Six early childhood education settings were identified and agreed to participate in the project. In each case, Ofsted had judged the setting to be offering 'outstanding' provision and this was a primary sampling criterion for the settings, because it provided a degree of parity in terms of the settings' attempts to support this aspect of the children's development, which could be more closely aligned to the development of values and character than other assessment criteria.

A second criterion for selection was the classification as either urban or rural. This distinction was chosen to allow for subsequent analysis of data on the basis of differing demographic variables. Three urban (London) and three rural (Kent)

settings were randomly selected from a list of those judged to have outstanding provision.

While sample children had agreed to take part in the project from the six early ECE settings, 14 primary reception classes where these children chose to progress to, were also involved in the study. Among them, eight classes were in community primary schools, one in a Roman Catholic primary school, four belonging to Church of England schools, and one independent school class.

2.3 Features of the Sample Settings

The three settings based in the Kent villages of Halstead, Plaxtol and Cranbrook are located within areas which DEFRA (2004) identifies as rural on the basis of the local population and the area's accessibility. The other three settings are located within the urban London Boroughs of Islington, Waltham Forest and Greenwich. The distinction between the Kent and London settings is amplified when further socio-demographic data is taken into consideration. All three Kent settings are located in areas that fall within the top quartile for the least deprived⁴ areas in the county and, indeed, the country as a whole (KCC, 2007). The picture is very different in the London boroughs where the super output areas in which the settings are located are more deprived than the London average and country average scores.

Data from the Office of National Statistics (2007) also shows that while the total populations and percentages of people from ethnic minority groups are small in all 3 Kent locations, the population in the London boroughs is both dense and comprising a large percentage of people from different ethnic minorities. Not surprisingly it is also the case, therefore, that the diversity of religious affiliations in the population is very narrow in Kent and very broad in London. The relevant data on deprivation, population numbers, ethnicity, and religions for each of the settings' super output areas were initially explored in contextualising the study but no significant findings emerged in relation to such factors in the analysis. This is probably due to the small sample size for the focus children (n=24).

⁴ On the basis of the Indices of Deprivation, Office of National Statistics 2007

Features of the six early childhood education settings in the project

Settings	Places	Number of staff		Management arrangements	Premises	Accessible outdoor space
Low Hall (London)	75	Full T.	10	Maintained	Purpose built	Yes
		Part T.	6			
Rachel M. (London)	137	Full T.	25	Maintained	Purpose built	Yes
		Part T.	15			
Holly Park (London)	27	Full T.	4	Independent	Hall rented from local church	No
		Part T.	1			
Halstead (Kent)	24	Full T.	1	Private	Rented from school	No
		Part T.	5			
Cranbrook (Kent)	24	Full T.	2	Committee-run	Purpose built	Yes
		Part T.	5			
Plaxtol (Kent)	24	Full T.	1	Private	Hall rented from local church	No
		Part T.	6			

The sample included a range of management arrangements. Four of the settings are classed as 'PVI' settings, having private, voluntary or independent management arrangements; two are 'maintained', which means that they are managed by the Local Authority. The greater proportion of PVI settings in the sample coincidentally reflect the proportions of provision types (PVI and maintained) generally in England according to figures reported by the OECD (OECD, 2006). Despite there being a range in the number of places for which a setting was able to offer, from 20 to 95, all the settings had in common a combination of full-time and part-time staff. One setting overtly follows a specific approach to early childhood education: Holly Park operates on the basis of a pedagogy developed by childcare pioneer, Maria Montessori.

At the time of sampling (May 2008), the numbers of children and staff in each setting reflected the requirements of the *National Daycare Standards* (Ofsted, 2004) for staff: child ratios; these Standards were superseded in September 2008 by the EYFS. Two of the settings function under the constraints that many face when operating within rented (shared) premises; in both these cases, church halls.

London (Urban) Settings:

Low Hall is a local authority maintained nursery school located within the socially and culturally diverse London Borough of Waltham Forest. It has been a Nursery School since 1929. There are 75 children on roll and 15 of them attend from 8.00am

to 6.00pm for 48 weeks of the year. The remainder attend on a part-time basis, for either morning (9.15 to 11.45am) and / or afternoon (12.45 to 3.15pm) sessions, during the school terms. Most are from minority ethnic backgrounds with English as an additional language, and a large majority of these are in the early stages of learning English. More than 25% have learning difficulties or disabilities. Many children are from disadvantaged home circumstances, and more than 40% are eligible for free school meals. In January 2006, the school was designated as a children's centre, as part of the Government's initiative to improve childcare provision and offer families a range of accessible services or advice within one location. The premises were purpose-built and offer free-flow access to outdoor spaces. There are 10 full-time and six part-time members of staff, of whom three are teachers, four nursery officers, three support workers, two nursery assistants, one co-ordinator and three play leaders. Ten of these staff members have Early Years qualification at various levels.

Rachel McMillan Nursery School and Children's Centre is on the border of Greenwich and Lewisham Boroughs in London. It is a maintained setting serving an ethnically diverse community. There are 95 children on roll of whom approximately 80 attend on a full-time basis. The largest minority ethnic group is Black African, with most of these children being of Nigerian heritage, followed by White British. A higher number than average are learning English as an additional language. Half of the children are eligible for free school meals. There is a smaller than (local) average number who have been identified with learning difficulties or disabilities. The staff comprises 25 full-time and 15 part-time members. The key worker system⁵ is not used in the nursery. Instead, a 'shelter' system has been created. Children are divided into four different shelters. The members of staff in each shelter share the responsibility for children's learning across all areas of the EYFS. 29 of staff have Early Years qualifications at various levels.

Holly Park Montessori school is situated in the London Borough of Islington, belonging to one of the Montessori Children's Houses in the Maria Montessori Institute. It is registered as an independent school offering Montessori nursery and primary education for children aged 2 to 7 years. There are 27 children on roll in the nursery class. Most of them attend full time. The school supports children with special educational needs and also supports a number of children who speak English

⁵ The key worker system is intended to ensure that each child has one adult who is familiar with the child's needs and learning, settles the child into nursery, liaises with parents, observes the child's progress and maintains relevant records of progress.

as an additional language. The school receives funding for 3 and 4 year olds. The majority of the children are of White British heritage. There are four full time and one part time members of staff, all of whom have post-graduate diplomas in Montessori method, theory and practice.

Kent (Rural) Settings:

Halstead Nursery has been operating since 1983. It is located within a rural Kent village with a population of just over two thousand. It operates from a school classroom in Halstead Community Primary School. There are 27 children on roll, 23 children of whom receive early education funding. Most of them only attend part time. The nursery supports children with learning difficulties and disabilities. There is only one child who speaks English as an additional language. Most children are village residents. A few of them are from the nearby military base. One full time and five part time members of staff are employed. All of them have Early Years qualifications to NVQ level two, some at level three or four. Two of them are enrolled on an Early Years Foundation Degree.

Plaxtol Nursery School is situated in Plaxtol village, rural Kent. Operating from two rooms in the village hall, the nursery school has 39 children on roll, of whom 29 receive early education funding. The children all attend for a variety of sessions. The nursery supports children with learning difficulties or disabilities. Most children are from the local area and all speak English as their first language. One full time and six part time staff are employed. Five staff members have Early Years qualifications to either NVQ level two or three.

Woodpeckers Preschool opened in 1998 and operates from purpose built, single storey premises on the outskirts of Cranbrook, rural Kent. It is a committee run preschool. There are 49 children on roll, including 37 who receive funding from government. Most children are from the local community, with a few from outlying villages. The preschool supports some children with learning and emotional difficulties. There are a few children who speak English as an additional language. There are two full time and five part time members of staff. Of these, four hold Early Years qualifications and the others are working towards a qualification. The preschool receives support from Kent Early Years Advisory Teachers.

2.4 Sampling of focus children

In the project's very early fieldwork phase, Stage 1, cohort 1 included only seven children as project participants. This helped the researcher to gather general information about the settings, have informal discussions with parents and staff, 'get to know' the participants, gain consent from participants, pilot the research instruments and begin to gather observation evidence. In Stage 2 (cohort 2), four focus children including two boys and two girls in each setting were selected, there being twenty-four children in total, aged between three years five months and four years, when Stage 2 began in September 2008. All the children were reasonably articulate, although English was not necessarily their first language. The children were initially identified by the manager of the setting as those who were within the appropriate age-range. Two boys and two girls were then randomly chosen from these groups and consent sought from parents. Where consent was denied (n=2), the next child (boy or girl) on the 'list' was selected. In September 2009, the third cohort comprising twenty-four children was recruited again to take part in the project using the same methods as for cohort 2.

Research design			
Stage	Time scale	Children's age when they joined the project	
Stage 1 (7 Children)	May 2008 – August 2008	Cohort 1	Aged 3 to 4
Stage 2 (7 + 24 Children)	September 2008 – August 2009	Cohort 1	Aged 4 to 5 (reception class)
		Cohort 2	Aged 3 to 4
Stage 3 (7 +24+ 24Children)	September 2009 – Feb 2010	Cohort 1	Aged 5 to 6 (year one)
		Cohort 2	Aged 4 to 5 (reception class)
		Cohort 3	Aged 3 to 4

2.5 Other participants

Within the six settings, 14 focus children's key workers and 24 (of the focus children's) parents were invited to take part in the study in stage 2 (cohort 2). The head teachers or the managers of the settings also participated in interviews, informal discussions and the practitioners' survey (questionnaire). Other informants in school settings included 14 reception year teachers, 3 teaching assistants, and 2 head-teachers, with whom informal discussions took place.

2.6 Methods

It was intended that the various research methods employed would be complementary, building a rich picture of young children's character development. The data collection methods were also cumulative in order to build theory that was

grounded within and generated from the views of the study's participants (Glaser and Strauss, 1967).

The study included a review of research on young children's moral character development and also included early years policy documents and other early years texts.

Other methods included:

- (i) Unstructured observations of children's everyday interactions and the ethos of the settings. There were 86 visits, lasting six hours each, to ECE settings (84%) and primary schools' reception classes (16%).
- (ii) Discussion groups with adults - parents/carers, ECE practitioners and teachers. There were two discussion groups with the parents and one group with ECE practitioners in the Kent setting
- (iii) Questionnaire to parents/carers and ECE practitioners. There were 313 parent questionnaires and 50 practitioner questionnaires were administered.
- (iv) Interviews with parents, ECE practitioners and teachers and reception teachers. There were 6 interviews with the parents in London settings, and 28 interviews with ECE practitioners, teachers and reception teachers in Kent and London settings. All the interviews lasted ten to twenty minutes each.
- (v) Discussions with ECE practitioners and parents by means of video clips. Four discussions were performed in Kent and London settings
- (vi) Discussions with children by means of stories, video clips, and children's own materials developed through employment of the 'mosaic approach'.
- (vii) Home visits. After obtaining the focus children's parental consent, five home visits were completed. Two visits in Kent settings and three in London settings.

The approach used for data collection method is discussed in the findings. In the next section, a particular discussion about unstructured observation follows.

2.7 Unstructured observation: A naturalistic approach

Two of the main research questions in this study related to an exploration of the young children's understandings of character, values and morality, and the identification of examples of morality and values exhibited through their play, narratives and interactions. A naturalistic observation approach was chosen. The significant usefulness of this approach is threefold (Dunn, 2005). First, children grow up in social worlds, a complicated network which they need to adjust themselves to

live with. It is within their social relationships that their characters, the understanding of a set of values, and the beliefs in certain moral frames are developed. Using naturalistic observations provide opportunities to gather data that may evidence how children use their power of understanding others and the value systems they embrace to interact with different people in a variety of social interactions.

Second, naturalistic observations occur in a real-life context. The data gathered record children's real-life experiences and their reactions to those experiences. Although data drawn from laboratory-based and different kinds of standard procedures with hypothetical scenarios can provide more precise aspects of the situations which are significant in relation to the outcome of interest, there is no guarantee that those kinds of findings can reflect what children really experience in their daily life.-To choose a positive reaction in a scenario delineating a friend falling off the bike says very little about what a child will really do in his/her real life encounter.

Finally, naturalistic observations allow researchers to study the situations/events that are emotionally meaningful to them. There are very few values, moral concerns and characteristics which human beings embrace without being somehow emotionally linked. It is possible that one feels positive when helping others and sad when others snatch toys. The naturalistic approach enables researchers to record such information in the real-life context by children's talk, behaviours, facial expressions and physical posture. The emotional dimension can enrich the interpretation.

Limits of this approach also need to be made explicit. As mentioned above, there is a lack of control in naturalistic observations in comparison with others, e.g. experimental approach. To define and standardise the features of children's experiences are difficult. Therefore, the power of generalisation may be problematic and extra cautiousness needs to be taken when drawing inferences from behaviour in particular contexts and to individual child. It appears that the factors, e.g. piloting the observations, the length of observation and level of observation description are crucially related to the issue of reliability, although still no studies have reported the assessment with regard to these aspects (Dunn, 2005). However, this study is intended to document, explore, analyse and report the development of character and values in specific case study children; it is intended to provide illustrative evidence that will not be applied in general to the wider population. The

interpretations of the findings need to be considered as provisional, partial and open to other interpretations. Nevertheless, the issue of internal validity of research instruments is still important and detailed practical procedures used in conducting observations will be discussed in the finding chapters.

2.8 Ethical issues

The study has considered ethical issues at three levels. Firstly, it followed the *Revised Ethical Guidelines* of the British Educational Research Association (2004). When the research was conducted it was always with the utmost respect for its participants and concern for their comfort and well-being during the research process. The study was also subject to scrutiny by the University's internal Ethics and Governance Committee (Faculty of Education) prior to commencing fieldwork. Secondly, detailed information was provided for practitioners and parents/ carers who completed and returned consent forms (see Appendix 1). The identities of all participants (including practitioners, children and their parents) were protected through anonymised data storage and in this report and efforts made to ensure that the data would not be used in a manner that might inadvertently identify individuals who wished to remain anonymous. All participants retained the right to opt out of the project at any time. Finally, the ethical concerns were borne in mind within day-to-day research conduct. The researcher sought the children's permission to observe or talk with them on each occasion that a visit was made to a setting. In the case of young children, it was important that the researcher always tried to be alert to the range of cues and signals that the children gave to show displeasure or unwillingness to take part or continue. It was also important that the researcher was sensitive and attentive to the ways of interacting with the young children and their peer group.

2.9 Limitations of the research

In this exploratory study a particular methodological challenge was to capture and illustrate examples of children's moral awareness and character without confining these to a prescribed definition of character or set of values and beliefs. The naturalistic observations were deliberately unstructured for this reason and the process of analysis inductive. Although this report suggests interpretations of the vignettes of children's play that were observed, it is recognised that alternative interpretations are possible and that the children's behaviours vary in different contexts and situations. This approach also meant that there was no attempt made to deduce the impact of specific variables, such as the apparent influence of a child's

gender or ethnicity in their character formation. Although the researchers were aware of these factors, the analysis did not yield evidence from which any conclusions might be drawn about gender stereotypical behaviours, for example. Consequently, there is scope for further research in relation to these factors.

3. Young children's development: character and values in observation evidence

This section is a story of young children's developing characters and episodes of their lives observed by researchers or described by others. It begins with a vignette of Hannah (not her real name); similar vignettes of three more focus children have been included as an Appendix 2 to this report. In this way, it is hoped that the reader begins to develop a sense of familiarity with the people and places that the children encountered; the routines, incidents and challenges they experienced; some of the ways that they negotiated everyday or unusual encounters; and, through this, an insight into these children's characters. These vignettes have been constructed using evidence gathered from a range of sources, including observation visits that took place over the course of a 19-month period (June 2008 to December 2009). There is not sufficient space in this report to include all the children's stories; the decision to include some, but not all, has been based on practicality, not on interest.

A mosaic of evidence (Clarke and Moss, 2001; Clark, 2003) was collected throughout the course of the study; some of it planned (observations, for example) and some of it opportunistically gathered (such as ad hoc conversations with professionals at work, or parents as they dropped off or collected their children from a setting⁶). This evidence was structured to provide a growing picture of each child. Summaries have been included in this report and the first can be found in this Section, part 3.2 *The Children's Vignettes (I-V)*

Collectively the focus children's pictures created a montage of developing characters among the children who were involved in the study. The montage was formed through an ongoing, cumulative process of constructing, questioning, reconstructing, evaluating, deconstructing and once again reconstructing the evidence from which several key themes emerged. The second part of this Section provides an overview and illustrative examples of each of these key themes in 3.3 *Emergent Values and Developing Characters*

Each theme was then subjected to further scrutiny in the analytical process, returning to the original notes and transcripts, and resulting in the development of theoretical models for those themes that most frequently emerged and for which the evidence suggests a highly complex construct. Understandably, perhaps, there

⁶ In all cases, the participants were aware of the research, its aims and intended reporting outcomes and asked for their consent. The study's inherent ethical issues are discussed in more detail in Section 2

were often inextricable connections between two or more characteristics or values. These are exemplified in the final part of this Section in which the findings that were generated in relation to the theme of sharing have been presented in 3.4 *Theorising Children's Values*.

3.1 Collection and Analysis of Observation Evidence

The exploration of the children's characters and the significant adults' understandings of its development consisted of a mixed methods approach to data collection and analysis. Observations, primarily of the focus children (but also their peers and adults with whom they interacted) in their ECE settings and, later, their homes and primary schools were supplemented by discussions, interviews questionnaires parents and practitioners. The findings in sections 3 to 5 have been generated from the evidence that was gathered from all these research methods. The current section summarises the main findings from the observations; sections 4 and 5 then present in greater detail examples of the children's character through a series of thematic vignettes.

The research began with six observations (visits), which were conducted within two ECE settings in the project's first phase, in June and July 2008. During phase two, a further 60 observations were carried out across the six settings between September 2008 and July 2009. In the final phase, between October and December 2009, six observations of the final, cumulative cohort of 24 focus children in the six ECE settings were supplemented by 14 visits to the primary reception classes into which the 2nd cohort of children had transferred in September 2009.

There were 86 observation visits in total. Each observation consisted of a minimum six-hour period, mainly focusing on the four focus children's social interactions and play, but including the peers and adults with whom they interacted.

The observations were largely unstructured, following the focus children through their child-initiated and adult-directed activities, but these observations adhered to some key principles and processes. These were concerned with timing, location(s), other people present and researcher 'intervention'.

Firstly, each visit to a setting was designed to capture evidence that pertained to more than one of the focus children. During a regular day⁷, a minimum of thirty minutes was spent focussing the observation on each child in turn (although sometimes more than one focus child was involved in the interactions that were recorded in a single observation). But the observations also included a degree of flexibility. The advantage of this was to provide enough time in each single observation to follow a child's movement, be familiar with her/his friends and the activities/play that s/he favoured and to record the shift between one social interaction and another. The minimum 30-minute time period provided a good opportunity for the researcher to record how a child was able to initiate, invite and / or be rejected by her/his peers to play, and to record how the play or interactions continued or ceased. The time also allowed the researcher to record how others (practitioners and peers) played a role in constructing these interactions or play together. Sometimes the length of a single observation exceeded 30 minutes when an ongoing interaction, developing during the time of observation, was sustained.

Second, the area of observations was considered. Children were playing both indoors and outdoors. In some settings, children freely flowed between these two. Indoor and outdoor observations provided the study with a wider range of children's behaviour and talk. For instance, riding bikes, climbing trees, and running around outdoors provided a different context for children's social interactions in comparison to the indoor activities, e.g. colouring or playing with a train track⁸. The recording of children's interactions in different environments provided the potential for analysing the potential influence of location and associated resources and activities. In each case, the observation records include an account of the context of interactions; that is the events that were occurring including the place within the pattern of a setting's daily routines e.g. tidy up time, snack time, lunch time, circle time and story time. These contextualised the recording of the children's interactions or solitary activities.

Third, it was important to record the children's social interactions with a range of different people. These included other children, practitioners and other professionals in the settings, and siblings and parents/carers who brought in and

⁷ A regular day means that all four focus children attended the nursery on the day of visit. Occasionally a focus child was not present for various reasons, e.g. illness, travelling, etc. There were 10 visits when fewer than four focus children were present during the observations.

⁸ Occasionally activities such as these were set up outdoors, but there tended to be more physical activity / play when children played outside.

collected the children. Therefore, other types of interactions, for example, with their siblings or other adults were also observed while the interaction occurred.

Over time, as the children became more familiar with a researcher's presence, they sometimes instigated conversations. When the children appeared comfortable and confident with the researcher, some structured questions were deliberately used to create conversations with the children, for instance, "Who are the important people in your family? And why are they important?" and "Who are your friends in the nursery? And why are they?" By means of these conversations, some additional evidence emerged about values and virtues that the children perceived to be important.

Other methods included informal conversations with children, EY professionals and parents, which focused on video vignettes of the children's play made during some of the observations, and on the examples recorded in the observations. These served as prompts for discussions with the focus children's key workers (where applicable); additional evidence was drawn from the settings' own records of information, observations, and examples of work about/by the focus children that the professionals maintained in the course of their work; finally informal discussions with focus children's parents occurred on an ad hoc basis as well as home visits, arranged with parental consent.

All the observational data were analysed using Miles and Huberman's (1994) qualitative data analysis principles. Three steps were employed: data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing/verification. Using each visit as a unit, the content of each observation was analysed according to varied perspectives and components. In the first step any ideas, thoughts, doubts and speculations, which occurred during the process, were recorded. A second step of data reduction involved a comparison of similarities or differences between different visits within the same setting and also between different settings. Final decisions and verification of important themes and ideas were therefore made.

3.2 The Children's Vignettes

Throughout this section of the report, which focuses on the evidence about and from the children, readers will find a series of four vignettes (three in Appendix 2). These 'pictures' of the lives of four of the 24 focus children were developed using a mosaic of evidence. The evidence that has been included has been carefully selected to

protect the anonymity of the participants in accordance with the terms of their consent to the research. They are intended to provide readers with a sense of familiarity with the everyday experiences that were encountered by the young children before the Section moves on to highlight the main themes emerging from the evidence gathered during 86 observation visits to the ECE settings and primary schools attended by the focus children.

The Children's Vignettes I

Hannah's Story

Hannah was just four when the researcher first met her in October 2008 in her ECE setting, which she had been attending for one month. Throughout the course of the regular observation visits, Hannah was one of the few focus children who did not engage the researcher in conversation, although this changed towards the end of the observation period (which ended in December 2009). The researcher's first impression of her (field notes Oct 09) was that she constantly engaged with activities or 'work' (a word frequently used in the setting by both the adults and the children; e.g. a practitioner: "it's not time to go home. It's time to do some work (L3, 1.1.5)." and a child: 'I have to go back to work, L3, 2.3).

Imagine a four-year-old stamping her foot, clenching her fist and screaming out, "I don't want to do it" when a practitioner asked her to participate in an activity, or daddy asked her to wait for her little brother to give back her toys. The staff in her ECE setting commented that Hannah was an impulsive child. Whether she would be cooperative with adults' instructions depended on her mood. One observation account illustrates this:

Children were practicing Yoga.

Hannah didn't want to try the 'new' posture.

Children were all lying down.

Ruby: "Why do we have to lie down?"

The practitioner: "Because otherwise you will disturb your friends."

Hannah: "Why do we have to be quiet?"

The practitioner: "Because otherwise you will disturb your friends."

Hannah insisted on not doing the yoga posture. (L3, 6.16)

However, her resistance appeared to show her need to assert her autonomy, as another example demonstrates:

Hannah: "Come on, Ruby".

They were walking into the room with a purposeful air as though they planned to do something.

Hannah: "Remember what the teacher says... 'Not both together... you should do work alone'... We are going to be together everyday." (L3, 3.12)

[In the setting, although it was not strictly enforced, the children were usually encouraged to engage in independent learning.]

The staff in the ECE setting often found it a challenge to attract and hold Hannah's attention or encourage her to experience something new (in a sense, to cooperate with adults' instructions). The activities that the practitioners set up or situations which occurred seemed to 'need to appeal to her', or the ideas needed 'to come from her' (staff interview, L3T.2) otherwise, she might not be willing to join in. On the other hand, Hannah could be very cooperative when she played/worked with her friend even though her friend was observed to be demanding and emotionally manipulative. The practitioners observed that Hannah often would be very accommodating to the demands of her friend in order to maintain their friendship.

During an interview, a member of staff in her ECE setting commented that Hannah was a child "always thinking of 'me, me, me'". Their comments revealed an underlying belief seemingly based on developmental stage theories that children generally had a tendency to "be self-centred at this stage", but that Hannah's behaviour or manifestations of certain characteristics appeared particularly strong compared to her peers. However, they also commented that Hannah was very caring, kind and sympathetic, in particular towards younger children, including her little brother. Hannah's father shared this opinion. But her reception class teacher reported not having observed this characteristic at the time of the research visit⁹.

She lived with her dad, mum and younger brother in a semi-detached house located on a residential street in a multi-ethnic area. Hannah attended the nearby ECE setting on a full-time basis (Monday to Friday) while her brother went part-time. Both her parents went out to work; her father's job was full-time and her mother's part-time but both had negotiated flexible working hours to help them manage their childcare arrangements, taking turns to collect the two children from the ECE setting.

⁹ The fieldwork visits to reception classes took place in November 2009, some eight weeks after the children had progressed into their primary schools.

Sometimes the journey between home and the setting was made on foot, sometimes by car.

Arriving home at the end of the day, Hannah's dad or mum would prepare the children's 'tea' (meal) after which the two of them would sometimes play together but more often than not Hannah chose to play by herself, although sometimes her friends were invited to come to play. Hannah's favourite toys were her dolls. Hannah was a self-confessed Barbie devotee, which her dad corroborated when he described a (play) visit she had made to the home of two friends (both boys). When Hannah arrived, he said, she had not wanted to stay because she couldn't find any toys (particularly Barbie dolls) that she liked to play with. "Because they are two boys, you know, they have train tracks, lego...all sorts. It's very boys' kind of stuff. Hannah just didn't like it."

Both parents were very relaxed in their parenting style. Hannah's mum described an incident involving a visit to a restaurant in which Hannah had scolded the waiter off because he had brought out the wrong food. She had been very cross and explained, 'That is not what I want'. Her mum said that she had felt embarrassed and had later explained to Hannah that, 'It is not very nice to say things to people like that' but that they had not known how to tell her off.

Hannah was one of the older children in her year group. She loved numbers and writing and clearly articulated her likes and dislikes to adults and other children. She had some clear rules or standards. The example below illustrates this and similar instances were recorded in the observations at her ECE setting. The interpretation of this example was twofold. Firstly, when a rule/standard was violated (in this case, the paints were mixed up), Hannah seemed comparatively more concerned than her peers. She would continually raise the issue and draw others' attentions to it. Secondly, she dealt with the issue seriously. The scenario lasted for 45 minutes. Hannah firstly reminded the boys about the rule (not allowed to mix the paints). She then tried to find solutions (one way was to wash the paints and the other was to move to another table). After these solutions failed, she spoke with the practitioner about the issue and also wrote a notice to stick on the door as a reminder to the other children.

Context: After circle time, children went to choose the activities they would like to do. Some children were in the middle room doing painting. After a while, the boys started to mix up the paints. The girls were not happy about it.

Hannah: "Charlie, you are not allowed to mix' to a boy.

The boys did not stop even though Hannah had asked them to.

Hannah repeated: "You are not allowed to mix it, Charlie." After a while,

Hannah: "I know what to do. Let's wash it" to the girls.

Hannah used some water to clean up the colour palates and said, "We washed it and it looks very bright, pretty colours."

However, the boys did not stop. Hannah went to find an apron and put it on. She then went to another table to do the painting. [There were two tables in the room, shared between two classes.]

Hannah: "Girls, come to this table. The paint is clean."

Other girls were hesitant at first but they then all came over to do painting at the table to which Hannah had moved.

After a while, the boys moved over as well.

Hannah: "What I want you (mainly talking to the boys) to do is mix only one tray but not the other. So promise not to mix this tray" [there were two paint palates on the table].

The boys were quiet for a while and then started to mix both trays.

Elizabeth "They are naughty, aren't they? Why do you have to mix the colour, boys? That is not very nice."

The boys continued to do it. Hannah looked very cross. She took her apron off and left.

She went to talk to the practitioner about what the boys did.

Hannah: "Charlie, and the boys got wild, they're mixing the colour."

The practitioner nodded but did not follow this up.

Hannah then talked to the other girl: "The boys mixed all the colours."

The girl then went to the paint room (Hannah followed her) and checked. The girl talked to the researcher "'The boys mixed all the colours."

Hannah and the girl then left and went to another room to do painting.

Other girls started to draw houses, flowers etc. but Hannah wrote something down on her paper. Many children played outdoors. The boys were still in the paint room. Hannah finally finished her drawing and writing. She stuck it on the door and she read it out loud and pointed to the words as well "This is the sign so everyone knows they can't go to do painting in the middle room because the paints are mixed."

She asked the practitioner: "Have you got sellotape?"

She concentrating hard as she tried to make the sign stick on the door.

Other girls had started to do other drawings or went outside to play. However, Hannah continued to cut her sellotape.

Later on, while a few children passed her, Hannah explained and pointed to the notice: "It says, 'no people allowed here because all the paints were mixed by the boys'"

This example shows Hannah's persistence when faced with an issue that bothered her (e.g. a rule was violated). It also demonstrates her skilful attempts to circumvent or resolve the problem and to prevent its recurrence. When she transferred into her primary school reception class, she was the only child who came from her ECE setting. Hannah said that she missed the work they had done in her 'nursery', particularly number work. Her reception class teacher and a practitioner in the ECE setting had been in agreement that if Hannah liked something she would persevere with it but, 'if she doesn't like it, she will let you know!'

3.3 Emergent Characteristics

The observations were collected and analysed over a period of 19 months using a systematic process that involved repeatedly adding the evidence to that already gathered to generate what appear to have been the most commonly observed characteristics among the 24 children. Some characteristics, including environmental concern, were anomalies when they were initially added to the growing body of evidence. But the repetitive analytical processes were such that this particular quality became subsumed within a broader 'sharing' theme.

In addition to the key themes, there also emerged an apparent tension between, and sometimes within, specific characteristics. This was dubbed the 'I or You Dialogue' and the 'We dialogue' where the children sometimes struggled with competing interests while making sense of their personhood in relation to others around them. These issues are discussed in relation to each of the themes from which they arose. The discussions of characteristics are organised under the following headings:

A. Helpfulness including

- Being kind
- Being responsible
- Being sympathetic
- Being thoughtful
- Conforming to expectation / wanting to please

B. Caring including

- Showing love or concern
- Being sympathetic
- Being kind
- Being considerate

C. Cooperative including

- Being co-constructive
- Being appreciative
- Being competitive
- Taking control

D. Honourable including

- Being honest
- Treating others fairly

E. Constructive including

- Being humorous
- Being creative
- Being supportive
- Being flexible

F. Controlling including

- Being hurtful
- Taking revenge
- Being strategically deceptive
- Being manipulative

Sharing behaviours, which included a wide range of characteristics, are discussed separately in detail in part 3.v.

All of the emergent themes and characteristics outlined above are now described and illustrated with examples from the observations.

A. Helpfulness

Helping behaviours have been documented by many researchers (see review by Hay, 1994) as one of the early manifestations among children under the age of three years. Models or approaches established for explaining various helping behaviours can also be found, e.g. reciprocal altruism perspective (Trivers, 1971), empathy altruism hypothesis (Gilovich, 2006) and social exchange theory (Nowak, 2000). However, few studies further explore young children's helping behaviour. Those that do include Dunn (2005) who proposed young children's helping actions appear related to their attempts to alter others' psychological states.

Understanding helping behaviour is not a straightforward exercise. A helping action or talk relating to thought or understanding of helping behaviour needs to take into account many factors, e.g. context (what happened at that moment and the moment before, or where it happened), relationships, forms of help, who appeared at the time helping behaviour occurred and who was helped.

In this study, the findings show that young children displayed various helping behaviours in considerably complex ways. It presents two groups of helping behaviours. The first is comprised of helping behaviours that involved considering others' needs and well-being. The other involves considering one's own needs.

The manifestation of children's helping behaviours

Considerations of others		Considerations of self	
Characteristics	Examples	Characteristics	Examples
Being kind	Passing over the objects for her/his friend to use. (K1, 1,18)	Demonstrating personal power	"I'm not helping you" (L, 4.24)
Being responsible	Helping to tidy up	Acting as being responsible	"I always do it for her."
Being sympathetic	Helping others to express their needs (L1, 4.21)	Acting as a personal performance	"I'm helping to hang the clothes. They didn't to it. (L1, 1.27)
Being thoughtful	Helping to find towels in order to prevent leaking. (L1, 3.11)	Acting as being thoughtful	"I put apron on for them otherwise they get wet" (L1, 6.22)
Conforming to others' expectation	"I'm helping you" (L1, 4.26)	Acting in a self-centre way	"You are not helping me. You are not my friends" (L1, 1.50)
		To maintain the friendship	"She is my friend because she let me help her with work. (K1, 4.37)

Tidy up time

Before elaborating further the children's helping behaviours, it is crucial to understand the apparent role and functions of 'Tidy up time' that was a regular feature in all the six sample settings and in the primary school reception classes. This activity was demarcated in the course of a morning or afternoon session and required that the children stop whatever they were doing and participate in the teacher-directed, group activity of tidying up / away. Practitioners and teachers encouraged the children to help them and other children to tidy up and used praise to reinforce their participation, for example saying, *"You are such a good helping hand"* (K3, 3.3). Many children would comply with these requests, although not all children did. One practitioner observed to a researcher, *'It's difficult when the little ones come in September. These two-year-olds don't want to tidy up and it's very frustrating for the big ones because they're trying to put things away and the little ones won't let them or get everything out again, and they don't help.'* As such, this practitioner illustrated how the children were 'inducted' over time into the routine, group activity of tidying up the setting. Some young children also took part in the process of inducting one another into this tidying process, which they sometimes described as or inferred was a 'rule'. But it was also a means of encouraging a developing sense of shared responsibility in the settings. A failure to take on this responsibility was sometimes a source of recrimination and control:

Children played in the sand box together.

Leon: "Can Philip play?"

Eve: "He can't play. He hasn't done tidy up." (L1, 4.38)

Helping behaviour with consideration of others

From the vignette below, Leon's claim *"We didn't make the floor dirty"* implied that he had an understanding of **responsibility**. He knew *"We made the mess"* of the floor and felt that he needed to help tidy it up. The emergent 'helping' themes revealed associations with a wide range of other values or attitudes, e.g. sharing, conforming to the rules (tidy up time) or considering other's expectations (e.g. helping your friend).

Children played in the sand box area.

Leon looked at the floor and said *"We didn't make the floor dirty."*

Aaron then went to get a mop. Louis had the broom and Elise had the brush.

"Aaron, don't use that" Leon said.

Both boys were arguing about how to clean the floor.

Leon talked to Niamh "We made a mess with the sand. So we have to tidy up" (L1, 4.38)

The helping behaviours can also be associated with **being kind**. The vignette below demonstrates this point. Sally observed that a boy was looking for some play-doh. Without being prompted to share by adults, Sally passed her play-doh to the boy. Even though she was not interested in carrying on playing with it, she showed kind and considerate behaviour by spontaneously offering it to her friend.

A boy came over to do play-doh but he did not have any. He sat at the table. It looked like he was trying to find some.

Sally passed her play-doh to the boy: *"There you go"*

The researcher asked her: *"Why do you give it to him?"*

Sally: *"I don't want to do it now, really."* (P1 1.18)

The next excerpt provides another example of helping behaviour involving kindness. The context and the differences between three children (Kai, Pamela and Niamh) should be taken into account when reading this example. It appears that Niamh had not intended to snatch the glue from Pamela (by comparison with Kai). She waited patiently and finally searched for another possibility to solve the problem. In the end, she was still offering 'sellotape' to her friend despite the rebuttals she had experienced.

Kai was making a collage.

'I need glue' he said.

He then went to grab the glue from Pamela's hand.

Pamela did not let go: *"There is the other one on the table."*

Niamh needed some glue as well.

Niamh: *"Pamela, can I have some glue?...Please...I need some glue...Please."*

Pamela did not want to give it to Niamh.

Niamh gave up and she went to find sellotape to do her work.

Pamela 'Do you want to do some sticking?'

Niamh 'I need some sticks.'

Niamh took the sticks out from the box.

Pamela to Niamh: *"Leave it there (in the box)."* and also put her hand covering the box.

Niamh started to do her art work. After she completed it,

Niamh to Pamela: "Do you need some sellotape?"

Pamela did not respond and still carried on what she was doing. (K1, 2.29)

The children appeared to have different reactions when they saw/heard other children crying, e.g. covering their ears, finding a tissue for them, laughing, not knowing what to do, or patting them. In the next vignette, Karen helped Sandra to express her need. It appears that Karen was **sympathetic** to her friend's feeling.

Sandra was crying.

Karen to the practitioner: "She wants that dress" (the one Mary was wearing).

Mary: "I'm wearing it."

Practitioner suggested, "There was another one." (L1, 4.21)

When the children saw an accident happen they reacted in different ways, for example, telling teachers, walking away, doing nothing and watching, doing nothing and continuing to play, or doing something. Researchers (Gilovich, 2006) have considerable interest in understanding bystanders' attitudes and values when an accident happens. In the next example, some young children showed their **thoughtfulness** and sense of responsibility when they encountered an accident.

Karen and Elise were playing 'the baby game'. They both walked in and out of the tree house.

The roof suddenly started leaking as some water came through the top.

Karen was watching the leaking.

Elise examined the situation then said, "Should we get the towel? Should we?"

Elise tried to find the towel in the bathroom.

Karen had another idea. She went to get some tissues. Both were trying to dry up the floor. (L1, 3.11)

Helping behaviour with considerations of self

Although helping behaviour may be concerned with the needs of others, it appears that the consideration of self also plays a part in some of the young children's helping actions. What will be discussed here is not about 'helping' or 'not helping'. But how the role of 'self' may play a part in the helping process.-The understanding of helping behaviour in Leon's mind in this case was rather self-centred. Upon his unkind behaviour, (disregarding his friend's sharing suggestion, not willing to share

and pinching the sand from others' bowls), he claimed his friend's unhelpfulness was 'not nice'. It appears that others' helpfulness to him was taken for granted.

Thomas talked to Leon "I have this (a yellow dinosaur). You have that (a green one)"

Leon: "I don't care."

He started to collect all the dinosaurs from the sand box and sand pit."

Leon: "That's all mine."

Jo complained: "He is not sharing"

Leon: "This is the dinosaur birthday cake."

Two other boys put a few dinosaurs in their bowls.

Leon pinched the sand from their bowls when the two boys were not looking.

Leon carried on making the birthday cake with Charlie.

He talked loudly: "If you are not going to help; you are not going to help, you are not my friend. You are not very nice. You are not helping me." (L1, 1.50)

However, while young children are occupied by the thinking and feelings of themselves, they appear to connect with the world in a certain way. Leon's final proclamations revealed an understanding of the connections between helpfulness and friendship. Some young children in this group, conscious of others around them, presented their thoughtfulness, being responsible, or trying to exert their power. The examples below demonstrate these points.

Elise was often seen to be rather caring. The next vignette showed how she behaved **thoughtfully** in helping other children. However, the consideration of 'I' as an agent in helping others was emphasized. Elise's talk and particularly her expression to the adult implied the emphasis of her 'self' as an important part within the process of helping.

Elise was not playing with the water. Kai and Victor were playing with it.

Elise came over and helped Kai put his apron on and pushed his sleeves up.

Elise said to an adult, "I'm doing their aprons. Otherwise they'll get wet" (L1, 6.22)

Similarly, the helping behaviour appeared to be used as a performance in order to stand out among other children, seeking affirmation. There was a great emphasis on the agent of 'I' during the process of helping and Wendy's example is similar to that of Elise.

The practitioner asked everyone to help tidy up.

Wendy was doing tidy up as well.
She was hanging up the dress-up clothes.
She talked to the practitioner "I'm helping to hang the clothes. They [other children] didn't do it." (L1, 1.27)

Vida was also very caring. Within a conversation, she talked about what she did at home. She claimed frequently to help her sister "My sister didn't tidy up. She didn't do it. I always do it for her." (P1, 1.1). It presented her understanding of **responsibility** as well. However, again, the stress on what 'I have' is noticeable.

Helping behaviour may sometimes be regarded as a reciprocal act. However, withdrawing the provision of help may also be used as a social leverage to meet one's needs or exert one's power. In the example below, a young child gave up her dress possibly due to peer pressure or unconsciously conforming to a practitioner's expectation. Hence, her announcement "*I'm not going to help you*" seemed either a rebuke of her friend's request, or a demonstration of power, attempting to position herself as superior to the other girl.

Sandra was crying and seemed to ask for the dress Mary was wearing.
Mary: "I'm wearing it."
The practitioner suggested, "There was another one" to Sandra
Mary stopped for a while then said, "Ok then."
She gave up and took the dress off.
Then she said to Sandra, "I'm not going to help you."
Practitioner: 'Hmm, that's not a very nice thing to say. You don't have to. You can wear that dress.' (L1, 4.24)

Finally, young children praised each other for being helpful, reinforcing its importance as a value within their settings. Within a conversation with the researcher, Violet talked about the opportunity for her to help another child (Kai), indicating its role within their friendship.

The researcher: "Who are your friends, Violet?"
Violet: "Kai"
The researcher: "Why Kai?"
Violet "Because he lets me help him with his work" (K1, 4.37)

B. Caring

In this section, the focus is on young children's manifestation of caring qualities. The children were observed being caring towards people ("Are you all right?"), objects and animals (e.g. reminding their friends about the possibility of breaking a toy; see Tina's story, p). More detailed descriptions follow.

Children can be concerned with others' **physical safety** when they accidentally hurt others. They may say "*Sorry about that* (K2, 4.25)" or embrace someone.

Bailey wanted Kai to sit down but accidentally pushed him.

He then leant over to kiss him and comfort him by rubbing his arm. (K1, 4.38)

When **someone is sad or upset**, young children may show they care by 'offering help', for example providing tissues, drinks, simply patting the child on the back and even trying to comfort their friends with their own experiences.

Jane to Edward: "Do you want me help you with it?"

They started to carry the table but in an unbalanced way. Edward seemed cross about it. He shouted very loudly. Jane was upset about it and started to cry.

One girl came over to comfort her. She went to get Jane some tissues,
"One for your tears and one for your nose."(L3, 2.23)

The girl sat at the bench and looked sad

Lee told the researcher: "Fiona wants her mum" and he asked her nicely
"Do you want a drink?" (L1, 7.34)

Children were doing play-doh.

Ella came to join. She started to collect some play-doh from the bench. Hazella (who was playing there) suddenly noticed Ella using the play-doh. She pushed Ella and got the play-doh back. Ella looked slightly upset.

Elise: "That's not the way."

Ella stood there for a few seconds.

Elise patted her on the back. She pointed out to her: 'Ella, There **is** more there'

Children carried on doing play-doh (L1, 2.8)

Hannah: "Imogen, you have to leave your toys in the basket but you can't cry...I cried. But I am all right now." (K3, 3.2)

These behaviours show these young children's capacity to **be sympathetic** to others' feelings and also translate this sympathy into actions. Sometimes, in order to comfort their friends, they seemed to be willing to comply with the practitioner's request. The example below demonstrates that Sally cuddled Natasha and was willing to give up her dress and let her friend have a try.

Natasha wanted to wear a white dress but there were not enough dresses for all the children. She looked a bit upset and asked the practitioner for another white dress.

The practitioner: "But we only have two dresses. Only one is white"

Sally cuddled Natasha to comfort her.

Natasha was still crying.

The practitioner: "Would you like to have another dress?"

Natasha first shook her head but then she seemed to agree to the practitioner's suggestion.

The practitioner asked Sally: "Would you like to let Natasha wear that dress for a while?"

Sally nodded and took the dress off.

Natasha happily wore the dress and danced with Faye (who wore the white dress). They were turning and turning. Sally joined them. (K1, 1.11)

When observing children's role-play, there were many records showing they pretended to look after 'babies', 'young sisters', etc. Caring for younger ones also occurred in real life situations.

Elise played with a younger boy who had a balloon. She was then attracted by other things.

She said to the boy "You keep it safe. It may get lost"

Then she gently patted the boy on the back. (L1, 6.15)

Darcy played with the lego on the carpet. A little child took away one piece. Darcy did not take it back immediately. He followed the little child and waited. He tried to look around and searched for where the child had put the piece. He finally found it on the chair. (K3, 5.5)

Some young children were **caring to animals** although others were not. The vignettes below demonstrate this well.

Natasha and May were talking about fish by the fish tank.
They talked about how Liam took the fish out the other day.
The researcher “What did you feel when you saw the fish was dead?”
May: ‘I’m sad.’ (K2, 6.38)

The girls played in the sand pit. There was a bee lying in the puddle in the middle of the pit.
Children were observing it.
Some children wanted to smash the bee.
Anna was protecting it: “It’s just a bee...It’s not scaring.”
Lauren went to get a spade and smashed it.
Anna called out “No”
Lauren got a stone and smashed it again. (K2, 6.49)

A less common example of concern for animals, which was only recorded in the observations of one focus child, was Yuri’s decision to become a vegetarian at the age of 6 (he was observed in the first cohort and had by this time moved to primary school). His mum talked about it during a home visit:

Yuri is very cuddly, and loving, talks to people and wants to know you. He became a vegetarian about 8 months ago...it was very sudden. He loves animals. And one day he told us that he wanted to become vegetarian. He decided to do so. I talked lots and talked through this with him and he wanted to do it but the school (vegetarian) meals are not very nice. He became very weak. Later we started to discuss it and made a deal. He eats non-vegetarian food at school but eats vegetarian food at home. As a whole family, we tried to eat less meat. You know the thing about environment. And that is good to do. We cannot not support him.
(K2, home visit)

The children demonstrated their kindness in different ways, for example, inviting others to join their play and accepting such invitations, providing help or suggestions, and sharing things. There were many examples of **kindness**, some of which are included below. In the first vignette, the background information is rather important. Wayne was nearly three and slightly disruptive. He spread the sand around and spoiled others’ work. The practitioner tried to divert his attention and helped him to find opportunities to play. Faye observed what Wayne did. However, she was kind (offering him a basket) and helpful (providing information) despite Wayne’s disruptive behaviour.

Wayne tipped the water out of Natasha's pot. (Children played in the garden)
Natasha cried.
The practitioner "That's not very kind"
The practitioner to Wayne: "You can have your own one...look you can use that big one"
Faye passed the basket to Wayne.
The researcher showed Wayne the (pretend) shop. "You can go from this side"
Faye pointed out "There are steps there." (K2, 4.53)

Another example shows how the young children were **considerate**. Elisa waited for Abir to complete her work,

Both children played beads at the table. After Elisa completed it
She announced: "I am going to give it to my mum."
Elisa: "Should we play post letters?"
Abir was still making beads: "I don't know how to play it. I don't have a post box at home."
Elisa to Abir "Do you like to do it a bit longer? The bead is here."
She pushed the bead boxes towards Abir. (K2, 2.14)

C. Cooperative

Young children's manifestation of cooperation has been investigated in a few studies (Brownell et al., 2006; Olson & Spelke, 2007; Sylva et al., 2004). In this project, evidence also showed that the young children were capable of working/playing with their peers in a cooperative way in that they helped each other or sought compromises, often without reference to or in contrast to adults' instructions.

Play behaviours have been grouped into different categories (Parten, 1932; Piaget, 1962) including solitary, parallel, associative and cooperative behaviours. Play provides 'the rich experience for children to learn social skills; become sensitive to others' needs and values; handle exclusion and dominance; manage their emotions; learn self-control; and share power, space, and ideas with others.' (Isenberg & Quisenberry, 2002, p.1). As suggested earlier, it may also be a space within which to co-construct ethical identities and moral encounters (Edmiston, 2008; Dahlberg and Moss, 2005).

The children in the study's sample demonstrated a variety of play behaviours, ranging from solitary to cooperative activities. Some examples highlighting the children's sharing behaviours were found in their parallel, associative and cooperative play and these are outlined in the last part of Section 3 (3.v). In their cooperative play, the children demonstrated mutuality in process and purpose and characteristics including sensitivity, consideration, affirmation, competitiveness, domination and compromise.

The evidence reveals how the young children organised their cooperative play in sophisticated ways. In their mutual cooperative play/work, the children invited others to participate in the activities and shared in the **co-construction** of play narratives. This included the adoption of collective stances revealed through phrases such as, "We need xxx" or "Should we xxx?" or "Look, what we are xxx". The emphasis of 'we' in a group also demonstrated their understanding of collective effort.

Leon and Elise were making cake in the sand box.

May came: "Can I help you?"

Elise to May "We need a long spoon." Children carried on making the cake.

Leon: "Can Philip play?"

May: "He can't play. He hasn't done tidy up."

But Philip still joined the play. Other children didn't reject him.

Leon: "Add some sugar"

Philip: "Some milk"

Elise: "Butterfly"

Leon: "No animals"

Elise suggested "Maybe just decorations."

Leon: "Should we make ant cake?"

Then everybody started to put insects in.

Leon "We are making sticky cake."

Philip left.

May: "Add some salt."

Elise: "Look what we are making"

Leon: "That's disgusting cake."

Abel came over, Leon talk to him "Don't mess it up"

Leon to Abel: "Can you help us?"

May: "Can I show you?"

Elise: "Everybody can have it." (L1, 4)

Within their cooperation, young children may be appreciative, enjoying each other's company, sensitive to others' feelings (see Appendix 2 Tina's story) and pleased by others' ideas;

The two boys tried to construct their garage.

"That's a good idea." Leon said to his friend (L1, 3)

They also took pleasure in their collective achievements.

Niamh and Karen played with a puzzle. Both were very attentive.

"We did it!" Both cheered.

Karen: "Let's close it."

Niamh: "Put it into the cardboard box."

They put the puzzle away. (K, 3)

However, sometimes the cooperation took different, seemingly contradictory forms. One can be *competitive* cooperation, the other, *dominating* cooperation. In such situations, the children displayed a range of behaviours and employed different strategies to maintain and further their cooperative play. This reflected the ways in which the children's roles shifted during the course of an interaction but appeared nevertheless to be subsumed under the mutual aim of cooperative play. *Competitive* cooperation often involved two strong characters. Each child has her/his vision of play. They would initiate their own interests while cooperating with others. The cooperation would involve a series of suggestions, negotiations and compromises. The imaginative script (or the main story line) bounced back and forth between the players. The next vignette demonstrates this point. Parker, Darcy and other children were playing a baby game in the tent. After playing it for a while, Darcy initiated a new script (thunder) but Parker did not follow it. Later on a new script started (a dog chasing them). The boys then negotiated whether they should develop the theme of 'the dog is coming in' (Darcy's) or another 'go to work' script (Parker's). The play took at least 30 minutes before they moved on to other activities. Similar vignettes can be found in Liam's story (Appendix 2).

Children all stayed in the tent, which the teacher made for their play.

Parker: "We lost baby" [Pretend crying]

Darcy went out of the tent.

Darcy: "The thunder has broken the tent again"

But Parker kept closing the door.

Then both moved to the other side.

Parker: "The dog is coming."

They were pretending a dog was chasing them.

Darcy: "It's in our back garden."

Parker: "Shut our back door"

Darcy: "If you get out the dog will come in...the dog is going to come in. you see"

Parker: "He is not going to come in"

Parker: "I am going out. Then I am going to work."

Darcy "You don't have to. None of us have to go to work"

Parker 'I need to go to work'

Darcy: "We need to go back...The dog is coming in a minute."

Parker: "The dog would not come."

Parker went out and Darcy still stayed in.

The play continued. (K3, 2)

Dominating cooperation implies that children play in cooperation but one or a few of them dominate the play, **taking control**. The possible reasons for that domination, from the evidence collected in this study, could be 'age' (e.g. an older child, see example below), 'language' (e.g. English is not their first language; K3, 7), a strong character (e.g. Tina's story, Appendix 2). Isobel was 4 years and 10 months old, one of the oldest children in her setting. She described their cooperative play as, "*We are all in a big team*". The whole play developed smoothly and the children absorbed in it. However, Isobel took on a 'leadership' role. She nodded to indicate that other children might join in, organised the play (by giving out the trolley to other children), controlled the play "*You get that and we get that*", and announced proudly to the other child "*I finished before you.*"

Children were playing a shopping list game in the room by themselves.

May: "Isobel, can I play?"

Isobel nodded.

Isobel to a child: "Oh, very good memory."

Isobel: "It's your turn Elise"

Isobel tried to organize the game for everyone.

A boy: "It's our trolley" [Two boys shared a trolley]

Isobel: "You get that and we get that." [Isobel shared the trolley with the other girl]

Isobel: "We are all in a big team, aren't we?"

The boy: "I find this."

Isobel: "I'll have it. Give it to me, lovely."

Isobel talked to other boys. "We are working in a big team."

May: "Look, I finished."

Isobel: "I finished before you."

The boys "We have to put all the things into washing machine" [children have changed the play theme]

Isobel: "Clean and lovely" [Isobel followed the boys and played clothes washing]

Children all shared the play together.

Isobel "Should we work as a team this time?"

The children cooperated in a wide range of different activities, some of which they led themselves and others, which the adults initiated and led. They also had a variety of play partners with whom they cooperated. Some liked to play with a close 'best' friend, while others played with a wider range of people, including the adults. Some children were observed happily cooperating with a child they had just met for the first time. All the focus children demonstrated a capacity for involving and including others in cooperative and collective work, play and narratives.

D. Honourable

In this section, the focus is on young children's manifestations of honesty and fair treatment towards others.

Although there were some examples of the children's attempts to evade detection or to 'smuggle' items away, the next two vignettes show how the children were also **honest** about their wrongdoings (for example an accident or lack of consideration). Darcy voluntarily admitted to Parker that he had broken the car Parker had lent to him.

Darcy and Parker played cars on the carpet.

Darcy: "Do you want to play with my car?"

Darcy gave the car to Parker and Parker gave his car to Darcy.

After a while,

Parker: "Let's go because it's starting to rain" (Both pretended).

Darcy 'I am sorry, Parker. I've broken this.' Darcy showed Parker the car Parker lent to him.

Parker tried to stick the little piece back. Then Parker went to play with other things.

Darcy said: "It's still not right' after Parker had tried to fix it. (K3, 2.10)

Issac admitted that he pulled the parachute down when the teacher inquired.

Quite a few children played in the parachute area, which the teachers have designed for book reading. The parachute looked as though it was about to fall down.

The teacher came over: "How do I feel when I see the parachute is broken and pulled down. You let me feel so sad. Who did that?"

Issac: "I did it" (Issac is nearly four now)

The teacher: "Thank you, Issac. Thank you for letting me know about it. I am very proud of you..." (K2, 1.13)

The children also showed that they had grasped and were able to express through their words and actions the concepts of **fairness** and **injustice**.

Natasha and Faye were doing play-doh.

Wayne came over and took all play-doh the two girls were playing with out of microwave. It looked like he wanted to use the play-doh.

Natasha 'That's not fair.'

Faye 'It's not fair' (K2, 6.10)

In their play, the children sometimes demonstrated a hierarchical or relative notion of fairness whereby 'the person who asks first has the first chance to choose objects.'

A girl asked for a toy.

Bibe: "She said it first. She gets it...Do you want cats or dogs?" (L3, 4.12)

When the young children perceived that one had treated another unfairly, they sometimes intervened to express a view of what constituted the right or wrong behaviours.

Geovanni pushed Natalie.

Jane who stood next to them said: 'No, you can't do that. She doesn't like it.' (L3, 3.8)

Sometimes, they questioned a decision and defended their friends. In Kate's case, for example, she asked, "Why don't we want to play with him?" or sought an adult's help. For example, Leon appeared to be aware that Eden had taken away Neil's bike. He voiced the situation to the practitioner and confronted Eden with the statement *"You are selfish."*

Eden and Neil were arguing about the bike.

Eden talked to him "You have to get the timer"
Neil 'No' [Neil did not seem to be interested in using timer]
Neil did not want to let go.
Leon told the practitioner that Neil had the bike first.
Neil: "But I didn't have a turn". Then he left.
Leon "Come on Eden, you are selfish."(L1, 3.47)

Finally, the next vignette shows Elise's attempts to convince her friend (Philip) that his behaviour was unfair (pushing). She exclaimed, "*It's not very nice*" first and then repeatedly emphasized "*Philip is not kind to Fiona*". At last, she went to seek the teacher's help

Philip was playing with the music. He turned the music up very loud several times.
'The music is too loud for me.' A girl said.
Music carried on playing.
Fiona looked at what Philip was doing.
Philip seemed to push her (Fiona) slightly.
Elise saw it and said, "It's not very nice."
Children carried on arguing about the noise.
"You leave the music too loud." Fiona said
Philip pushed Fiona slightly again.
"Philip is not kind to Fiona" Elise said.
"I think I'm going to get a grown-up." Elise said.
A practitioner came in. "What happened?"
Elise "Fiona was hit by Philip."
The practitioner examined Fiona and asked what happened.
Elise "The music is too loud."
Practitioner: "Did you tell Philip?"
Elise "We both told him."

E. Constructive

This group of characteristics shows how the children employed a range of qualities and techniques to adapt to different situations. They related to people, expressing ideas and solving problems in clever, positive and humorous ways. They demonstrated their flexibility in seeking alternatives and sometimes not simply to abide by rules.

Studies of humour have included research that sought to find correlations between cognition and humour (Zigler et al., 1966). Others have theorised that humour provides a vehicle through which painful or difficult experiences can be transformed (Flugel, 1954); and the increasingly complex and compounded patterns in children's humour (Clarke, 2008).

Many of the observation records showed children's abilities to be very **humorous**, for example making jokes or teasing their friends. The next example shows how Nicola dealt with Abir's concern about a shortage of pink beads. She first comforted her with *"There are plenty of pinks"* and later pretended to take *"all the pinks"*

Abir was worrying that she did not have enough beads to play with.

Children were playing with the beads at the table.

Abir: "You - don't' take all the pinks (beads)"

Nicola: "There are plenty of pinks"

Nicola then leant toward Emalia: "Let's have all the pinks"

Abir: "I heard what you said"

Nicola smiled and said, "I'm just joking."

The teasing sometimes took a non-verbal form. Colin, for example, pretended to tip the sand out of Dale's truck. The teasing appeared to be a very subtle way to imply the intimacy between the boys (their ability to take the teasing), the trust of friendship and a way of creating or embellishing a game.

Jacob and Dale drove their trucks up to the hill. (Outdoor play)

Colin brought one little truck and tried to join in.

He raised his arm and looked like he tried to tip out Dale's truck which was loaded full of sand. He acted as he though was going to do it, but he did not really do it.

Dale tried to stop him: "No, Colin." Laughter.

Dale and Jacob pushed their trucks down from the top of the hill. Colin helped to catch one and gave it back to Jacob.

Jacob: "Thank you mate." (K2, 2.21)

Some young children could be great humorists.

After completing their game, the girls were tidying the puzzle board away.

Edith dropped the whole board and all the pieces spread on the floor.

Carol: "Not again."

Edith: "It just falls out. Maybe because it is so naughty." She was smiling.

Carol: "You need to help us, Edith."

Jane came over and talked to the researcher:

"I need to change after this. My dress is wet."

She went to find her clothes "That's the only thing in my bag."

She wore a short sleeve top and then went to dry her dress on the top of the heater.

It looked like she could not find any alternatives.

After a while, she came back and talked to the researcher:

"I found my top (smiling). They are hiding. Maybe they are playing hide and seek."

(L3, 2.8)

To share or be willing to share with others can be a challenging experience. Sometimes the children's response was to be **creative**. The next vignette demonstrates that Nate was aware other children were queuing for the bike he was riding and also sensed the time pressure (because the setting encouraged the children to use a timer for each person's turn). He encouraged himself "*I must hurry*" and tried to peddle the bike more quickly.

Nate rode a bike around the garden.

Leon to Nate "Can I have it?"

Nate didn't reply.

Thomas came and wanted to ride that bike.

Leon to Thomas "I will have it after that" then he went to get a timer.

The researcher pointed to the timer and asked Leon "What is that for?"

Leon: "Because I want that bike."

The researcher "How?"

Leon: "When it finishes I can have it."

Leon shouted: "The timer is nearly finishing."

Nate: "I know that. I must hurry."

Leon shouted out again.

Nate: "I know that. I must hurry a bit."

Nate peddled very fast. (L1, 1.37)

While facing a conflict situation, the children often developed creative and resourceful solutions. The next example illustrates how the children found a solution to satisfy both sides (older children and younger children). The older children did not

want to give up their higher status (sitting at the teacher's chair to tell a story) and the younger one did not want to compromise about not 'being able to' have the same opportunity. An alternative, the visitors' chair was used to solve the problem. The solution was one about which the teacher later commented, "Even us, we never thought about it, how that could be the solution! A visitor's chair!"

In the afternoon, children simultaneously gathered on the carpet and formed a circle. A few older children seemed to act as leaders. Lara and Flora sat at the teacher's chair and wanted to tell stories to other children. Most of the children seemed to agree. Carl (a younger child) wanted to sit at the teacher's chair too. Lara and Flora did not want him to do that because he was not telling the story and 'only people who tell a story' can do so. Carl threw himself in the book corner and began to wail and shout. Lara fetched the teacher. The teacher replied *"You have to solve it yourself."* They reached a solution whereby Carl agreed to sit on a visitors' chair (neither teacher's nor children's chair). Having accepted this, Carl happily rejoined the group and listened to the story. (Teacher's record, L3, 3.20)

While facing a difficult task, the children showed **positive** encouragement to others.

Two girls stood by the sink and tried to carry some water over to the other side.

Barbara: "Where's the water?"

Kelly: "Here"

Kelly: "You need to carry it like this [she demonstrated]. You are strong." (L3, 2.13)

Finally, the young children's willingness to be **flexible** was observed in different ways. Natasha often refused her friend's suggestions and tended to lead the play, suggesting roles and activities herself. After asking Natasha to bring a bottle (which at the time represented a pretend scarecrow's head), which Natasha refused to do, Faye found a solution. Her flexibility reaction had resolved the conflict and enabled the work to be continued.

Three girls were painting the scarecrow's head (a round bottle) by the table.

Natasha had orange, Faye had blue and Abir had yellow paints.

Abir to Natasha "Can I have that orange yet?"

Natasha: "No."

After a minute

Natasha to Abir "Can I have that yellow one?"

Abir: "Yes, can I have that orange?"

Natasha: "Yes"

After a while, Abir asked Faye "Can I have some blue?"

Natasha: "No"

Faye: "Yes." Faye then passed it over.

Abir now had the blue and Faye had the orange.

After painting for a while, Natasha moved the bottle away from the two girls.

Faye to Natasha "Don't take it."

Faye said it again: "No"

Abir: "We can't do any of it now."

Faye: "Should we go around there?"

Faye and Abir went around to the other side of table where Natasha put the bottle.

The three girls carried on painting.

Natasha to Faye "You can have yellow"

Abir: "I can have blue"

Faye: "And I still can have orange"

Abir: "Can I have blue?"

Natasha: "No"

Abir: "What colour can I have?"

Abir walked to the other side.

Faye to Abir "Can you pass over the yellow?"

Abir passed it to Faye.

After they finished it,

Abir: "Let's go to wash our hands"

Faye: "Let's do it."

Abir and Faye left.

Also, they were able to take "No" when others did not agree to join in with them

Kelly: "Barbara, do you want to go outside to play."

Barbara: "'No, I want to stay inside...I want to play with Philip."

Kelly invited Elle.

Both went outside together. (L1, 4.19)

In the last vignette, Neil showed his flexibility in negotiating a rule. In the garden, the children had been told to drive the car on the blue slope (a steep one) and walk on the green slope (a slightly flat one). However, the children often walked on the blue slope too. Although Eden complained about Neil's driving on the green path, Neil

gave a reasoned (at that moment, if Neil drove on the steep blue path, he would bump into other children who were walking there. On the other hand, the green path was not so steep; it was possible to drive slowly. Neil's flexible reaction shows his reasoning for not abiding by the rule.

Many children walked or drove on the blue slope.

Neil then drove on the green slope site.

Eden complained about it to the researcher.

Neil to the researcher: 'It [the green path] won't bump into people. There are many people [He pointed to the blue slope.] It [the green path] will be slower.'

(L1, 1.77)

F. Controlling

Some aspects of young children's manifestations have rarely been discussed or portrayed in detail. Judy Dunn's work has included bullying and betrayal of friendships when young children interact with their peers (Dunn, 2004).

During the observations, it was not uncommon to hear a young child claim, 'You are not my friend' as a threat, or social leverage when the situation did not favour him or her. There were also examples of children forcibly snatching objects from other children, including their close friends. The explanations of these could simply be written off as young children's 'self-centred' or egocentric behaviour. However, close examination of the observation data, including the excerpt below, demonstrate how capable young children can be when they choose to denigrate others, demand the objects they want, and reject or control others. The discussions below focus on four themes: being hurtful, taking revenge, strategic deception and manipulation.

Young children sometimes use **hurtful** words to their friends. For example, James (4 years and 5 month old at the time of observation) interrupted others' play and claimed Liam was, "*The silly man I have even seen.*"

Children played in the little house.

Gorge barged in and lay on one of the beds where Matt was lying.

Liam: "It's not your bed."

James: "It doesn't matter...You are the silly man I have ever seen."

Liam was very angry: "I'm not." (K2, 5.29)

Jacob (four years old at the time of observation) and Dale had a very close relationship. The pair played together all the time in the setting. Jacob was very

protective in his play with Dale. On one occasion, he rejected Mark's attempts to join in their play and the power of Jacob's use of language (not necessary in a complicated form) left Mark in isolation, *"Get out of the way...not playing with you...you are not my friend"*

Mark came over to see Jacob and Dale. Mark used his little car to knock into Jacob's truck.

Jacob: "Hey, don't hit it. Sorry, I am not playing with you. Get out of the way...not playing with you, get out of the way".

Mark ran away.

Colin joined in to play with Jacob and Dale.

Mark came over: "Can I play with you, Colin?"

Colin: "No"

Jacob: "You can not play with us. You are not my friend... I told you that you are not my friend."

Mark: "You are not my friend."

He looked slightly upset and left. (K2, 2.38)

'Should I hit you back if you hit me?' is a dilemma that many of the young children have faced. In such situations, some children found it hard to keep calm, walk away or report the incident to an adult. Sometimes they found a way to hit back, **taking revenge** as in Liam's case below.

Wayne and Liam were arguing about a hula-hoop. They began to scuffle at the back of the garden. Wayne finally got the hoop and then kicked Liam, who was on the floor, ran to the front of the garden and climbed onto the fort. Liam appeared unhappy about it. Carrying a stick, he pursued Wayne.

Wayne carried the hula-hoop and was going to climb down from the fort.

Liam waited for him to climb down and then hit him with the stick.

The teacher saw it and intervened. (K2, 7.56)

A boy hit Neil, who then told the teacher what had happened. The teacher did not intervene or follow this up. Later on Neil hit the boy when they played another game. (L1, 6.39)

In order to obtain what they want or avoid the things they dislike (e.g. tidy up), some young children were able to be strategically **deceptive**. Three vignettes demonstrate this point. The first one shows that in order to obtain a toy train from Joy, Colin claimed that the one he was going to take away was broken. In fact, the two trains that Joy was playing with were both in perfect condition. The practitioner noticed what Colin did and stopped him, taking the train away.

Joy and Jacob played in the sand pit for a while.

Colin came over and tried to take a Thomas train away.
Joy stopped him and did not let go.
After a while, Colin took the other one away: "This one, his eye is broken."
The teacher stopped him. (K2, 2.10)

Jacob in the next vignette did not like to take part in tidy-up time. He pretended to 'check the car and see if it is broken'. By doing so, not only he did not join in the tidy-up but he was able to play with the car for a little longer. The teacher later pointed out his behaviour and discussed with him everyone's duty during tidy-up time.

Tidy up time. The teacher told Jacob and Dale several times to help tidy up.
Jacob: "I'm checking the car and see if it is broken."
Jacob stayed with the car and rode the car as well.
In circle time, the teacher was talking about tidy up time.
The teacher asked: "Jacob, do you know Jane (a teacher) is a bit cross?"
He nodded.
The teacher: "Do you know why?"
Jacob: "I didn't tidy up"
The teacher "Do you feel sad?"
Jacob: "I'm not sad."
The teacher "You look a bit sad." (K2, 4.28)

The last vignette shows Kai's eagerness to obtain a big piece of Lego. It is possible that Kai had before the other child began to play with it. All the pieces were spread out on the floor. The vignette is divided into two parts. The first part involves the interactions between Kai and Oliver. In order to obtain the big piece, Kai appeared to try very hard to persuade Oliver to give it up. He first reasoned with Oliver "*When we play things we can only have one day and we need to give it back*", and emphasized Oliver's plane "*is too long...too big*", and finally expressed how he might not have opportunities to play if he 'does not have it now'. However, Oliver carried on playing with his plane and did not react to Kai's request. The second part involves the interactions between Kai and Matt. Kai persuaded Matt to 'break the plane and make another one'. Kai succeeded in making a plane with the two big wings, as he had wished. Matt was left with a plane with only one wing. Although later on, Kai offered his plane to Matt, Kai retained control of their play.

Kai, Oliver and Matt played Lego constructions.
Later Kai came to say to the researcher: "Oliver got my bit (a big piece of Lego).
That bit. It's not flying very well. It will break. Look (pointing out his own plane)"
When the piece in question fell off Oliver's plane, Kai wanted to take it but Oliver did not want to let go.
Kai to Oliver: "When we play things we can only have one day and we need to

give it back.”

He pointed to Oliver’s plane: “He always makes it too long”

Oliver: “No, but you do.”

Kai: “But why don’t I have another big thing to make the big wing out...your one is too big. He has too many bits...He makes too many things every day.”

Kai: “But his one is too big.”

Kai kept saying it and put his plane on the carpet.

Kai: “I had that in my hand and he put it in his bit.... I need the big thing because others have two big ones...I haven’t had a chance to. I only gave him it for one day. If I don’t have it now, then we are going to play outdoors. There will be no time. Then there will be tidy up time. There will be not much time today”

Kai pointed to Oliver’s plane: “It’s not very good. It’s too big”

Kai went to talk to Matt: “If we break it we can make another one”

Kai took Matt’s plane apart and assembled the pieces with some of his own plane.

Matt: “My plane can’t fly now. Where’s my plane gone?”

Matt followed and said: “Where is my plane now?”

Kai fetched a piece of Lego with wheels and gave it to Matt to calm him down.

Kai: “I’m going to make something”

Matt followed.

Kai was making the plane and said to Matt: “If you are happy you can have this (a big piece), and I will have another one (there were two big pieces).

Matt did not look happy about it.

He then took the one-wing plane back from Matt and used all three pieces.

After playing a while, he gave it to Matt: “You can play with this for 5 minutes and then I’ll play.” He then went to get a timer.

Matt played a little then said to Kai: “You can have it now.”

Kai: “Why?”

Matt: “I don’t want to play with it now”

Kai to the researcher: “He is very kind to let me play.” (K1, Kai, Reception class)

The final theme concerns controlling behaviour within relationships and the ways that some of the children could be **manipulative**. Pamela and Helen knew each other in the nursery. They became very close in the reception class. The relationship, as the reception teacher described, was *“One dominates the other...for example, one eats a banana; the other has to do the same. We are keeping an eye on it and may need to talk to the parents about it”*.

The records began with Pamela’s talk, for example *“I am going to put Helen’s one up as well.”* When Pamela arrived at the school, she put her name card up on the wall and also did it for Helen. Pamela said, *“Helen, you need to go behind me”*.

Pamela’s manipulating and controlling behaviours are shown in the example below. Pamela often asked Helen to do things, *“Can you go to get another one?”* She

controlled how Helen did things (to write her name as she wrote) or how she should not do them (not to take the paper when Pamela was using it; not to draw pictures). Helen seemed to be overwhelmed by Pamela's power and demand. She simply followed Pamela's requests and everything was based around Pamela's needs *"I'll make it for you...I'll draw it for you."*

May was doing drawing.

Pamela: "Is that for me?"

Helen: "For me."

Pamela: "It's for me, because it is my birthday."

Pamela and Helen started drawing pictures.

Pamela to Helen: "Can you go to get another one?"

Helen: "That's just my picture."

She went to get another paper for Pamela.

Pamela drew and Helen watched.

They then went to get more paper from the drawer.

Helen wanted to get a piece of paper out but Pamela pulled her hand out rather harshly.

Helen: "I'm going to make one for myself"

Pamela: "No, you can't"

Helen: "I'll make a picture for you"

Pamela "No, you can't"

Helen: "I'll do it like I do it at home....draw it for you"

Helen started drawing something and wanted to write Pamela's name on the top.

Pamela "It's not A. Now you have to make another one now."

Helen followed and got another piece of paper and did the drawing.

Pamela "I'll show you how I write my name first"

Helen followed.

Pamela "Just do it quickly."

The above discussions have highlighted themes that emerged from analyses of the observation records. Many of the qualities and behaviours that have been mentioned were integral to the major theme of sharing, which is the focus of the final part of this Section.

3.4 Theorising Children's Character Development: Sharing

Although, superficially at least, young children may be occupied greatly by their own needs, desires and interests, their abilities to involve or take others' needs or interests into account should not be ignored and has been demonstrated earlier in this Section. Inevitably, there is struggling, negotiation and compromising between

the conflict of “I and YOU”. This section presents a detailed account, using observation evidence, of ways in which the young children struggled with, compromised or sometimes expertly negotiated this potential conflict between their own and others’ interests.

Sharing behaviours in young children

Young children’s sharing behaviours documented in some reports (Rheingold et al., 1976; Hay et al., 1991) suggest that children’s early sharing may occur shortly before their first birthday. Rheingold et al. (1976) claimed that infants begin the process of sharing by offering food and other objects to their companions, e.g. mothers, fathers, siblings, peers and other adults. The sharing behaviours of these infants, which the authors also called ‘partner play’, involved showing objects to other persons at a distance, and engaging in coordinated use of them.

Some studies have focused on the frequency of sharing behaviours (Rheingold et al., 1976; Hay et al., 1991, Rao and Steward, 1999), and the people with whom young children share, e.g. friends or acquaintances (Birch and Billman, 1986). Others have explored children’s understandings of sharing (Austin, et al., 1987), the relationships between sharing and variables e.g. young children’s capacity in moral reasoning (Eisenberg et al., 1988), and empathy (Eisenberg et al., 1987), the reasons that young children share, e.g. need for approval or reciprocity (Staub and Sherk, 1970), and the resources for learning to share, e.g. parenting styles (Radke-Yarrow, et al., 1983) and preschool education (using incentive social reinforcement, Doland and Adelberg, 1967). However, there is a paucity of studies exploring the content of young children’s sharing behaviours (what the children actually do). This may be explained by the use of divergent methodologies for studies of sharing behaviours. The majority of studies used experimental designs. Even though some data were collected in school or home environments, a hypothetical scenario or a preset testing design was in place. In this study, employing naturalistic observations in a range of contexts provided a possibility not only to explore the possible contribution of environment to children’s behaviours, but also while they were engaged in both adult-led and child-initiated activities.

At the beginning of the analysis, the researchers initially considered the data relating to the theme of sharing from the children’s expressions in self-talk¹⁰ and in

¹⁰ Vygotsky (1962) suggested that young children’s self-talk was an adaptive function, which helped solve problems and which later became an internalised behaviour linked to self-regulation. Duncan

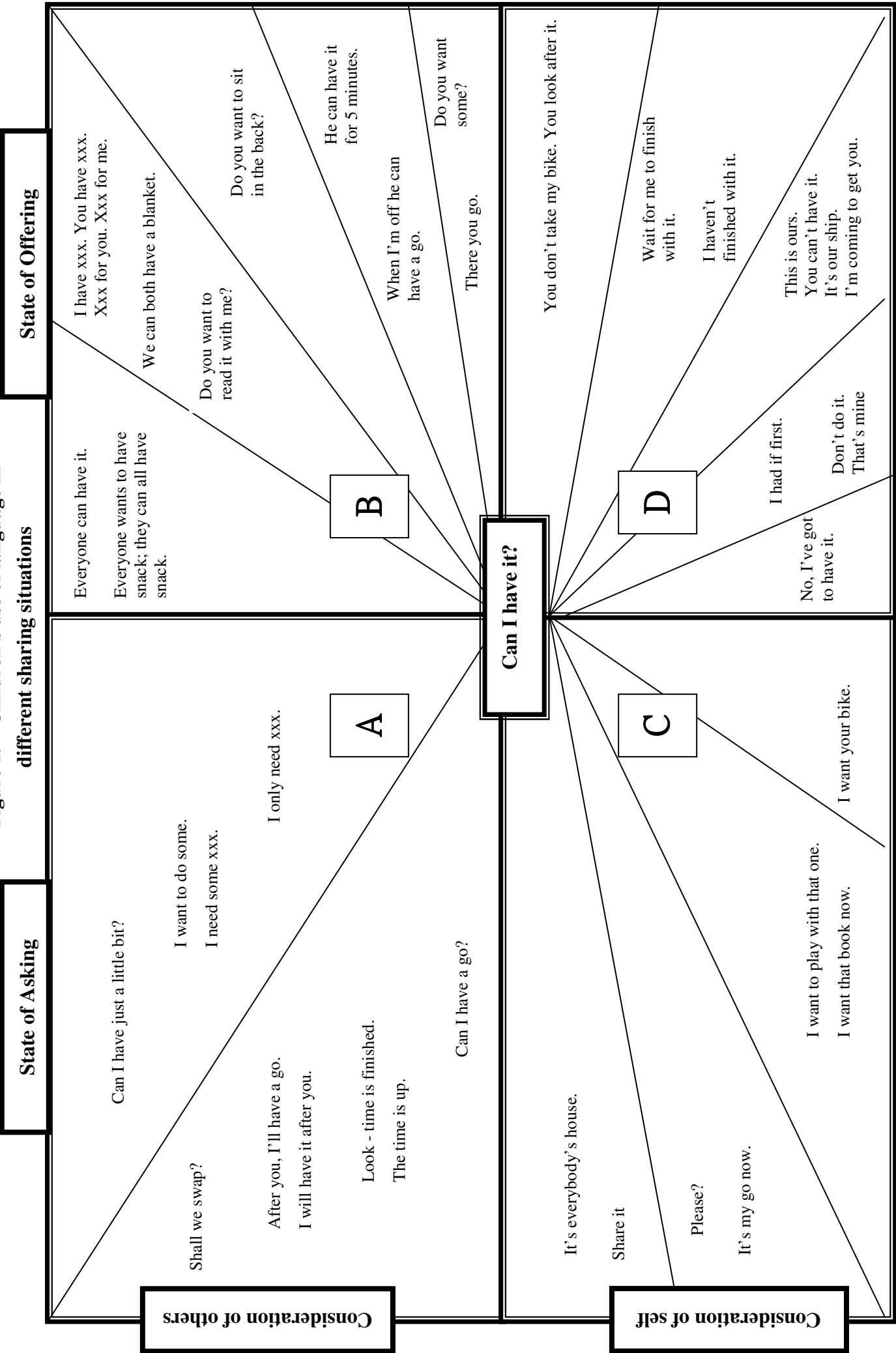
interactions with peers and adults. A common expression that children used to begin the process of sharing was, "Can I have it?" This request elicited a range of responses and reactions. It is necessary to bear in mind that many interpersonal interactions are not neat or verbal and the interactions of children as young as three in this study were complicated. There were a number of sharing behaviours that occurred in a non-verbal and subtle way and these, too, were taken into account.

These themes were initially generated from (a) the employment of Miles and Huberman's (1994) data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing/verification analytical processes; (b) independent coding by 2 researchers of the emergent themes, comparison of interpretations by a third research and subsequent discussion of tentative findings among the research team; and (c) the development and discussion among the research team of theoretical models to illustrate variations and possibilities within a theme.

The diagram below represents a theoretical model that uses quadrants to illustrate the language the children used in various sharing situations. This model was developed from the cumulative analysis of the children's language and behaviours data from observations. The thematic codings were grouped into 4 types, which led to the development of a four-quadrant model. This shows how some children made requests for others to share with them (state of asking), and others offered or declined to share (state of offering).

and Pratt's (1997) study of task difficulty showed that self-talk was more common among young children when they were faced with difficult or unfamiliar problems.

Figure 1. Children's use of language in different sharing situations



3.5 Children's Use of Language in Different Sharing Situations

Quadrant A illustrates combined examples of the state of asking with consideration of others' needs or interests. Common examples of language used included, to share 'a little bit', have 'some', and 'only need some'. The children appeared to contemplate the idea of sharing and did not tend to take 'everything' away. During group work, Harriet considered her peers as she appealed to Tom to share:

Tom moved the beads box towards the other side of the table (or towards him)
Harriet: "Can you move it back to the middle; so everyone can have it." (K2, 1.0.4)

They were certainly not taking an entirely self-centred view in these cases. The observation excerpt below illustrates an example of children's attempts to share.

Emma has built a farm by herself. The fence has been knocked over by other children but it still has some animals in it. She went to play with other things but still stayed around the carpet area.

Gia and Glen were building their farm. They put two tractors outside the farm...They started to gather more animals from other places e.g. Emma's farm. They put a big piece of cardboard over the animals so the animals could 'go to sleep'. Then they began doing a jigsaw puzzle.

Emma was back and asked: "Are you playing animals?"
Gia: "We are."
Emma: "You are playing with a puzzle."
Gia was quiet.
Emma: "I need some animals"
Gia: 'We need animals' (Gia did not use an aggressive tone. She said it quietly)
Emma: "You can't have too many...I only need a baby one."
Gia: "We don't have..."
Emma 'I want a black baby one'
Gia: "This is a pink pig" (Gia picked up one animal that was left on the side and handed it to Emma)
Emma: "I don't want that one."
Emma: "If you are playing with that (puzzle) you can give me the animal."
Gia: "We are still playing"
Emma: "I only need one."
Gia: 'We need all of them'
Emma: "You've got to share"
Gia: "Ours are all there"
Emma: "Ok" (She said it quietly) (K3, 1.2.4)

The young children's examples of behaviours that did not involve snatching items from others may evidence their consideration of others' needs e.g. psychological state (Cassidy et al., 2003) or physical safety. They displayed alternative strategies that included requests to share without causing conflicts. For example, young children proposed, "Can I have a go? (L3 2.2.3)" or "After you, I have a go. (K1, 2.2.4)" or "Shall we swap? (K2, 2.1.9)" to ask for sharing. They also reminded others of the related conventions for sharing in the setting, for example, the use of a timer for taking turns on a bike, "Your time is finished. The time is up. (K2, 1.3.7)"

Quadrant B illustrates the combined state of offering and apparent consideration of others. For example, when a child was preparing the morning snack for others he talked to himself: "Everyone wants to have snack; they can all have snack." (L3, 2.2.2) Children displayed behaviours that showed ways in which they negotiated sharing that not only fulfilled their own desires but also took others into considerations.

Jacob and Mark were making an object together using the sellotape.

Mark: "We are making something, Jacob."

Jacob: "I am helping you...we don't want it to fall down don't we?"

Mark: "No"

They both asked an adult to help them cut the sellotape.

Jacob: "We need lots of sellotape, that bit for you and that bit for me." (K2, 2.2.19)

Children also suggested sharing to their playmates, "We can both have the blanket" (L2, 2.3.8). In the excerpt below, Gemma and Joy's exchange shows the contrast between their sharing behaviours. While Joy is prepared to share and offers two options to Gemma (reading together and taking turns), Gemma is eager to take the book for herself:

Gemma: "I want that book."

Joy: "I am reading it."

Gemma: "I want that book soon."

Joy: "Do you want to read it with me?"

Gemma: "I want to bring that book home."

Joy: "It's *teacher's* book. You can not bring it home."

Gemma: "I want that book."

Joy: "I'm reading it too. In a minute." (K3, 2.2.6)

Quadrant C illustrates combined examples of a state of asking with consideration of one's own interests where the children were highly preoccupied by their own needs. Even though children have learned to use the language referring to sharing, it appeared that sometimes their attempts were linked with the fulfilment of personal needs. For example, in the next case, a girl claimed, "It's everybody's house". Superficially, the language suggests consideration of the needs of the group. However, her associated behaviours suggested that this statement was an attempt to get what she wanted. She rushed into the constructions that other children were building saying, "I can get through this". She did not use other strategies, such as asking in a considerate way. Instead the sharing language was used in an instrumental, self-fulfilling way, seemingly contradicting the meaning of sharing itself. Finally, the girl chose not to play in the house and quickly moved to something else but her interjections had resulted in the other children giving up their construction activities.

Roger and Anna were very busy collecting various things: toys, a road sign, books, chairs...etc. They were building a house.

After a while, some children came over and rushed into the house.

A girl: "I am home!"

Anna: "This is ours"

A girl: "I can get through this"

Roger: "No, that's ours"

Anna "That's our house. You can't have it. It's our house."

The other girl said: "It's everybody's house."

Anna pondered for a while and announced: "We have got to change"
Roger: "We are going to move house because the children are upset. They are stealing."
Both children moved some objects to the caravan and both played inside.
Other children did not stay in the house, they all left (L2, 2.1.4).

Similarly, a boy (just under 3 years of age) showed that he was starting to use the language of 'sharing'. However, during the observations he did not demonstrate the idea of division and reciprocity in sharing and used it in a rather instrumental way too. These two examples reveal how children may have acquired the language of sharing without having comprehended its implications or displaying relevant behaviours. It is an area that requires further exploration.

Tim kept walking around the place and picked the things up. He picked a piece of Harriet's work up. He took it away.
Harriet said: "That is mine, I drew it."
"I drew it" Tim said.
"No, I drew it." Harriet insisted.
They were arguing the same dialogue for a while.
"Share it" Tim said.
"I drew it" Harriet said.
"I am going to go away" Tim said.
"That's better, isn't it?" Harriet said to the researcher.
After a while, Tim came back.
Harriet holding her paper said "I drew this, Tim"
Harriet ran away. (K2, 1.3.5)

In Quadrant C, the examples illustrate the ways in which some children were highly preoccupied by their own needs and had great difficulties with grasp the idea of sharing as reciprocity or division. On encountering a situation in which they needed to wait for their turn, they waited impatiently or asked repeatedly and desperately. Kai's example serves to illustrate this point:

Children played in the park, Kai kept holding the ball.
The teacher asked him to let other children have a turn.
Kai: "No! Ball is for me."
Teacher said "You need to wait for your turn."
Kai "Do we play binocular?" [The binoculars were a favourite of Kai's]
Teacher: "No, we don't"
Kai: "Why not?"
Teacher: 'Because someone has chosen other games to play.'
Kai: "It's my go now."
Kai quickly took the ball when someone kicked it out of the net. (K1, 2.1.5)

Often the children were eager to have certain objects, especially their particular favourites and would sometimes demand these: "I want to play with that one!" (K2, 2.1.8), "I want that book now!" (K3, 2.2.6) On occasions this great desire manifested itself in forceful and aggressive behaviour, as shown in the next example:

Children were riding bikes in the garden.
Leon, demanding the bike, argued with Nate who was riding it. Nate began to cry and toppled over at which point Leon left.

Leon went to fetch the timer and approached a boy who was riding another bike, demanding again:
"Lee, I want your bike!" He showed him the timer then waved it up and down in front of Lee's face. (L1, 2.1.8)

Quadrant D provides examples of children's overriding attempts at self-fulfilment, whether or not they superficially presented themselves as considering their own or others' needs. Sharing behaviour demands the sacrifice of one's possessions by the sharer for the benefit of others. It is not unusual that in situations where limited resources are to be shared, interests of the self and others lead to conflict. To offer one's favoured possessions to others may be even more challenging for children as young as three. It was not difficult to find that children in Quadrant D defended themselves for not sharing things or cautiously protected their ownerships when they agreed to share things. For example, when a girl finally agreed to share a bike with a boy, she claimed "*You don't take **my** bike. You look after it.*" (K3, 2.3.5). The other example also demonstrates a child's offering of objects was to fulfil his own interest.

Darcy and Jacob played in the quiet room.
Jeff came in and took Darcy's gun.
Darcy: "That's mine, Jeff."
Jacob: "Give it back."
Jeff: "Jacob, you are my friend... you can have these (the marbles that Jeff was playing with)"
[Jeff got what he wanted. He kept the gun.]
Darcy: "If you want, I'll find another one for you."
Jeff: "I'm going to give it (the gun) to Jacob when I'm finished it and you're not helping."
Darcy: "You have to share. Are you going to share? Give me some marbles."
Jeff: "Yes."
[Jeff gave one marble to Darcy. Jeff left with the gun.]

Jeff attempted to obtain Darcy's gun. He then snatched it away. However, in order to maintain his friendship with Jacob, he offered the marbles to him (but not Darcy in the first place). The offering may act as bribery in order to persuade Jacob to agree his snatching from Darcy.

One of the ways that children protected their 'ownership' of possessions and delayed or declined sharing them with others was using language such as, "*Wait for me to be finished with it.* (London3, 2.1.7)" or "*I have it first.*" (Kent 1, 2.1.2) or "*That's mine.*" (Kent 3, 2.1.10) A slight conflicting situation was, for instance:

Natasha came and wanted to play in the tree house where the boys were playing.
Issac slightly pulled her shoes and wanted her to get down.
"That's our ship" Issac said.
Teacher: "Can you let Natasha in?"
Issac: "That's our ship"
Teacher: "Why not?"
Issac: "That's our ship"
Later on Issac threw the other child's train out of the house.
Teacher: "Issac, I think James has got hurt."
Issac said to the other child: "That's our ship. Get off."

Glen too claimed 'It's our ship. I'm coming to get you. Get off.'
 The teacher: "I think the toys belong to all the children"
 Issac did not want to accept it.
 The scenario was continuing. (K2, 2.2.23)

To share with others can be challenging. The manifestation of sharing is a term espoused by many educators, but is a complex process requiring a balance of attendance to one's own desires for ownership, with a wish to maintain friendships and interactions. The research still explains too little or has great difficulty to conclude what reasons make a person willing to share, how children learn to share and the complete picture of the process of sharing, if there is one. The final example presented here illustrates the complexity of sharing.

Gia, Glen, Mary. Glen played in the sand box.
 Gia asked Glen "Can I have it?" (A little blue spoon)
 Glen "You can have it when we tidy up"
 Glen carried on playing with the blue spoon for a while and left it on the table.
 Gia saw it and took it to make another model.
 Glen: "I don't need it any more" when he saw Gia using it to make a model.
 After Gia finished with it and left it on the table, Glen took it back immediately.
 Glen: "I don't ever let go of this."
 Mary: "You need to share"
 Gia: "You need to share that"
 Glen: "You can't get hold of this" After a while,
 Gia: "I am going to tell"
 Gia went over to talk to the practitioner: "He won't share the blue spoon."
 After the practitioner intervened, Glen let go of the blue spoon.
 Gia made a few more sand models.
 Glen: "I can make it crack."
 Gia: "He is going to smash it."
 Mary: "No more arguing"
 Gia tried to make one more model.
 Gia: "We can share it" after she finished making her models.
 "Now, you can have it" Gia said to Glen and passed it to him.
 Gia: "I have got a big family" She looked at her completed sand work.
 Glen: "I am going to tell teachers you need to share that"
 Glen pushed his model to Gia's one. They were arguing.
 Gia: "We got to share it".
 Glen: "No, I got to have it." (K3, 1.3.4)

In this situation, for some reason Glen seemed to have a great need to keep the blue spoon. He did not want to share it with others. When he was not able to keep it, one way he seemed to make himself feel better was to announce, "*I don't need it anymore.*" As soon as he had the chance to take it back, he claimed "*I don't ever let go of this.*" The children (Gia and Mary) were continuing to reinforce the idea of sharing and also asked for the practitioner's intervention. However, Glen seemed to perceive sharing in an instrumental way, "*I'm going to tell teachers you need to share that*" for his own social leverage with Gia in this situation. His final statement still strongly defended his desire not to share. The theme of sharing is explored further in the next section.

A continuum of sharing behaviour

Having developed the four-quadrant theoretical model onto which the examples of children's sharing behaviours have been plotted, a continuum of sharing actions was then considered. In a three-dimensional representation (diagram, below), the vertical dimension (X) indicates whether children would like to or not like to share objects with others. The Z dimension indicates children's consideration of self or others, and the Y dimension is a series of sharing acts, which emerged from the analysis.

While taking Z and Y dimensions into account, the extension of considering others involved different themes. It needs to be noted here that each theme may not have a clear-cut definition. However, it helps to demonstrate how some young children were able to deal with a complex concept that involved sharing in a variety of ways and demonstrates their competence at adapting in different situations.

Volunteering – Children give away the objects to others willingly

Children were doing play-doh.
Darcy asked Sally: "Do you want some?"
Later, a few children came and asked for some play-doh. The boy gave it to them.
Then the boy left. (L2, 2.3.8)

Taking Turn – Children swap the objects in turn and consider the needs of others.

Darcy: "Parker, Ollie got the cars" [Ollie had Parker's car.]
Parker: "I said he can have that for five minutes."
After a while, Darcy to Parker: "Do you want to play with my car?"
Darcy gave the cars to Parker and Parker gave his car to Darcy. (K3, 2.2.3)

Enjoy Together – Children play/use the objects together and happily

Darcy wanted Roger's bike. Darcy was very upset and desperate to have a go.
Roger: "Do you want to sit on the back?"
Darcy did not want to accept the offer.
Later, Darcy acquiesced and Roger gave him a lift on the back of the bike. (L1, 2.2.4)

Distribution with Justice - Children play/use the objects together and involve a sense of fairness

A boy moved the bead box towards the other side of the table. [More toward him]
Harriet: "Can you move it back to the middle, so everyone can have it." (K2, 1.0.4)

In contrast, the extension of considering self included themes:

Taking Turns – Children swap the objects in turn but considering the needs of themselves.

May had a board and used the hammer to push the nails into the board.
Jacob was doing the same. Suddenly, Jacob took one nail out from May's work.
May looked puzzled.

Jacob said: "I will give them back to you later."
May did not say anything.

Asking – A general request for having an object. For example: "Can I have it?"

Demanding with Emphasis – Asking for the objects with emphasis of tone.

Gemma: "I want that book."
Joy: "I am reading it."
Gemma: "I want that book soon."

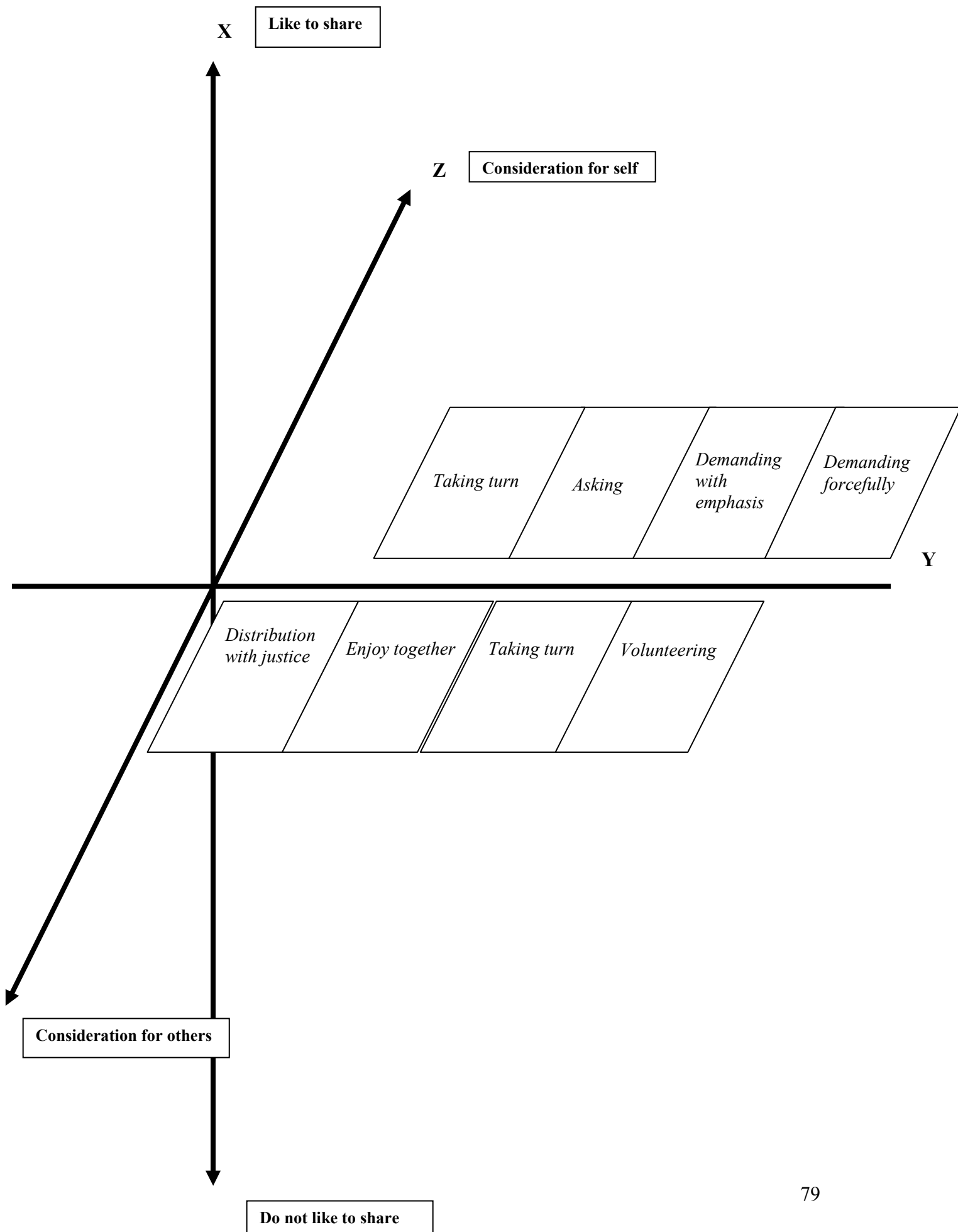
Demanding Forcefully

Children were riding bikes in the garden.
Leon, demanding the bike, argued with Nate who was riding it. Nate began to cry and toppled over at which point Leon left.
Leon went to fetch the timer and approached a boy who was riding another bike, demanding again:
"Lee, I want your bike!" He showed him the timer then waved it up and down in front of Lee's face. (L1, 2.1.8)

The observation data showed that 'taking turns' was a phrase commonly and frequently used by the adults to the children. Taking turn behaviours were also commonly found across the settings as well as mechanisms to reinforce this type of sharing behaviour, such as the timer and some resources (e.g. bikes that only one child could ride at a time). The observations were predominantly focused on the children's interactions with each other, but included their interactions with significant adults. Further research is needed into the ways in which the adults (for example the practitioners in the ECE settings) model or reinforce particular constructs such as those that were components within the continuum of sharing behaviours outlined in this Section. This is particularly pertinent to studies that explore these behaviours within the contexts of individualistic or / and collective discourses.

The next Section reports the findings from a survey of the children's parents, exploring their understandings of character and beliefs about character development.

Figure 2. Children's sharing behaviours emerged from their daily interactions with peers.



4. Young children's character development – the parents' perspectives

A mixed methods approach was used to gather evidence about parents' understandings of values, character development, the characteristics they (parents) have observed in their children, the characteristics and values that parents would like their children to have when they grow up, and the ways that parents promote these characteristics and values at home.

The first method involved two semi-structured discussion groups in Kent (involving 11 parents) and eight individual, semi-structured interviews in London¹¹. The discussion groups each lasted for fifty minutes and each individual interview took ten to fifteen minutes. The parents who took part in the group discussions and interviews formed a random (opportunity) sample of the parents in all six settings, being those who were willing and able to participate within settings that were most eager to facilitate this part of the research. The findings from this set of data had two uses: contributing to the mosaic of qualitative evidence about the young children's character development¹²; the other was to steer the development of the research tool for a subsequent phase of data collection: the parents' questionnaire.

From the literature review (including the review of character education in an earlier study linked to this¹³) it is clear that character cannot easily be defined. It can be 'an interlocked set of personal values' which guide a person's conduct, and the conduct involves 'choices about right or wrong actions and thoughts.' (Arthur, 2003: p.2). It has also been suggested that 'character is comprised of, but not equivalent to, dispositions, trait, habits and tendencies' (Knowles and McLean, 1992: p.165). Therefore, throughout the discussions and interviews, 'qualities' and 'values' were deliberately used as the working definitions of 'character' to facilitate the conversations between the parents and to reply to questions arising from the parents.

The second part of data collection involving parents consisted of a self-completion questionnaire (Appendix 3). In total, 313 questionnaires were distributed to the parents of all the children attending the six Early Childhood Education settings at the time. The parents returned the questionnaire in one of two ways, either handing it back to the settings for collection by the researcher, or posting it back to the research centre themselves using the free-post envelope provided. In total 180 completed questionnaires were returned, yielding a satisfactory response rate of 58%.

The questionnaire was constructed following the parents' discussion groups, interviews and a review of literature, which was predominantly about the development of (children's) moral character. Each item in the questionnaire was informed by a combination of these earlier research enquiries. The questions themselves were initially driven by the literature

¹¹ The researcher was unable to find mutually convenient times when the parents in London were able to gather in small or large groups for discussions.

¹² Where those who took part were the parents of 'focus' children (n=5)

¹³ See Arthur, et al. (2006)

review but were refined and the question 'pools' (Moser and Kalton, 1971) determined by the parents' responses to the initial enquiries. The phrasing or language used in the questions was also informed and influenced by that used (or not used) by the parents. The questionnaire consisted of 13 items designed to gather demographic data and 85 items concerned with character, values, character development and attitudes about the purposes and parents' use of ECEC (grouped into seven sections). Responses were structured using a rating scale for the measurement of attitude based on Likert (1932). The scale ranged from 1 to 5, with 1 being 'strongly agree' and 5 'strongly disagree'. All the returned data were entered into SPSS 16.0 statistical package. The analysis involved the generation of descriptive statistic, and principal component analyses and ordinal logistic regression models were applied. The findings are organised within seven sub-sections that follow on from the information about the parents' demographic data:

1. Parents' views about their child's character (at the time of completing the questionnaire)
2. Parents' aspirations for their child's character when she/he is an adult
3. Parents' views about a 'good' person.
4. Parents' views of character development
5. Parents' views about early childhood education purposes and uses
6. Parents' views about factors that influence a child's character (and its development)
7. Parents' views of their interactions with their own children at home

The achieved sample (n=118) included parents of boys (54%) and girls (46%); their children¹⁴ were mostly older than three years of age with 24% aged 4 years and above, 36% 3 years 6 months to 3 years 11 months, 27% 3 years to 3 years 5 months. Only 13% of their children were less than 3 years old. This broadly reflected the general intakes of the six settings as a whole. Overall, the majority (76%) of parents reported that their child had at least one sibling, but 24% reported having an only child, rising to 35% as a proportion of the parents from two London settings. By contrast, the proportion for the third London setting was considerably lower (14%) as it was in all three Kent settings (10%).

Among the whole sample, the majority of parents were aged between 31 and 40 (56%) and there were differences in the range of ages across the six settings.

¹⁴ Parents were asked only to provide this data about their child or children (if more than one) who was (were) attending the ECE setting at the time. Data about siblings were gathered from separate items in the questionnaire.

Sample by setting and parents' age (percentage)

	Total	London Rachel	London Low Hall	London Montessori	Kent Plaxtol	Kent Woodpecker	Kent Halstead
	%						
21-30	27	37	37	0	0	18	8
31-40	56	45	56	57	86	64	85
41-50	17	19	7	43	14	18	8

The respondents predominantly reported that they were female, with just 13% of the sample stating that they were male. All of the male respondents were from the London settings, (18% RM, 16% LH and 27% M).

The parents were asked to describe which situation they were in: unemployed, student, employed full-time, employed part-time, parent/carer full-time or part-time. None described him/herself as a part-time parent. Differences were found across the six settings. Only London Rachel and London Low Hall had parents describing themselves as a student. Also only parents in London Rachel, London Low Hall and Halstead described their states as unemployed. No parents in London Montessori, Plaxtol or Woodpecker described themselves as unemployed and the majority of parents in these three settings described themselves either as employed part-time or as full-time parents. There are numerous reasons why parents might choose to describe themselves as unemployed rather than full-time (or part-time) parents. Data collected in this study cannot elucidate this and further exploration may be merited.

Sample by Setting and State of Working (percentage)

	Total	London Rachel	London Low Hall	London Montessori	Kent Plaxtol	Kent Woodpecker	Kent Halstead
Unemployed	15	21	21	0	0	0	15
Student	7	12	7	0	0	0	0
Employed full-time	18	25	23	29	7	0	0
Employed part-time	28	23	16	43	50	32	54
Full-time parent/carer	32	19	33	29	43	68	31

As a whole, parents were from more than 15 ethnicity backgrounds. However, there was a great difference between London and Kent settings (as described in the research design and method section).

In Kent settings, 96% of the respondents were White British and 4% were from other White backgrounds but not White Irish. In London Montessori, 79% parents were White backgrounds, 7% were White Irish, 7% Black African, and 7% Mixed White and Asian. In London Rachel, 38% were Black African, 23% White British, 15% other White backgrounds, 7% Black Caribbean, 4% Chinese and 13% spread between Mixed White and Black Caribbean, Indian, Pakistani, Other Asian, White Irish and Others. In London Low Hall, 27% parents were Pakistani, 21% other White backgrounds, 14% White British, 7% Black

Caribbean, 7% Others, 5% Indian, 5% preferring not to state and 2% each in Chinese, White Irish, Mixed White and Black Caribbean, Mixed White and Asian, Other Mixed background, Black African, Other Asian background, and Bangladeshi. In general a child's ethnicity was reported to be the same as her/his parents. However, there were a few exceptions when the parents had mixed ethnicity marriages. The 3% parent-child anomalies were due to the adoption of children.

Parents' religions included Church of England (22%), Catholicism (22%), no religion (21%), Islam (18%), other Christian (10%), other religions (5%) and Hinduism (1%). However, the data showed very different situations in individual settings. Hinduism and Islam were only reported by parents from London Rachel and London Low Hall with the highest proportion of parents reporting their faith was Islam in London Low Hall (49%). Parents, who reported their faith as 'none', were found across the six settings, with the highest proportion from London Montessori (46%). The majority of parents from Kent settings stated that their faith was Church of England (54%).

Sample by Setting and Parents' Religions (percentage)

	Total	London Rachel	London Low Hall	London Montessori	Kent nurseries/ pre-schools
Church of England	22	14	5	15	54
Catholicism	22	30	14	23	17
Other Christian	10	16	9	8	2
None	21	19	14	46	23
Other	5	4	7	8	4
Hindu	1	1	2	0	0
Islam	18	15	49	0	0

As a whole, the majority of parents stated that their children would choose to follow or already were practicing the same religions as them. However, a few parents were choosing to leave that decision to their children. There was a slight increase in the 'No religion' category from 21% (parents) to 26% (children).

The Comparison Between Parents' and Children's religion (percentage)

	All parents' religions	All children's religions
Church of England	23	22
Catholicism	22	19
Other Christian	10	10
No Religion	21	26
Other	5	5
Hindu	1	2
Islam	17	15

When asked about their qualifications, 8 % of the parents declined to / were unable to answer this question (left blank). Among the remainder that did respond, it was found that a relatively high number had a degree or postgraduate degree (55% combined), rising to 83% in London Montessori and 72% in Plaxtol, Kent.

Sample by Setting and Parents' Qualifications (percentage)							
	Total	London Rachel	London Low Hall	London Montessori	Kent Plaxtol	Kent Woodpecker	Kent Halstead
Below A level	19	22	21	0	7	14	39
Certificate	19	15	28	7	21	23	15
Degree	38	42	33	64	36	18	39
Post graduate degree	16	9	9	29	36	36	8
Missing	8	12	9	0	0	9	0

Before presenting the seven findings sub-sections, some statistical analysis approaches are discussed. Apart from descriptive statistics, in order to understand the relationships between various factors, e.g. school locations and types, children's and parents' characteristics and the questions posed, two other forms of statistical analyses were applied.

The first approach involved fitting 'ordinal logistic regression models' separately to each question, searching a reasonably wide set of possible, explanatory factors to find patterns in the data. Due to the exploratory nature of this project, the aims were not to determine a conclusive theory or a model about the phenomena, but to describe the possible interpretations of the phenomenon and provide suggestions for further research.

Performing ordinal logistic models in SPSS 16.0 version, the predictors used were **region** (London and Kent), **individual setting** (A, B, C, D, E, F), **setting type** (London, Kent, Montessori), **child gender** (girl and boy), **child age** (4 years old and above, 3 years 6 months to 3 years 11 months, 3 years to 3 years 5 months, and under 3 years), **with or without siblings**, **parent age** (15-20, 21-30, 31-40, 41-50 and 51-60), **parent gender** (male, female), **parent education qualifications** (below A level, certificate, degree, post graduate) and **parent status** (unemployed, student, full time employed, part time employed, full time parent/carer and part time parent/carer). These predictors were tried for each item. Other predictors including parent ethnicity and religion, and child ethnicity and religion were not used in the analysis due to the small number of some children in some categories within the sample, which could not support useful models with a reasonable degree of accuracy. Only the best-fit model is presented in the appropriate sections.

The second approach was Principal Component Analysis (PCA). It helped to reveal simpler and could perhaps show rather subtle patterns within a complex set of variables and also express similarities and differences between variables within the data set. This is achieved by analyzing the differences between different respondents' patterns of responses. In this case, the hidden coherent themes underlying the responses coming from participants were established for understanding parents' views on values, character development, etc. Next, detailed findings are presented under each of the seven sub-section headings.

4.1 Parents' views about their child's character (at the time of completing questionnaire)

There were 13 items in this group. The average data-missing rate was 2%. The items 'My child is naughty' and 'My child is selfish' had the highest missing data rate (4%). There were no missing responses for the item 'My child is happy.' All the parents either agreed (32%) or strongly agreed (68%) that their child was happy.

Using ordinal logistics regression models, frequency counts and mean scores for each item are listed below. 1 point is assigned to 'strongly agree'; 5 points are assigned to 'strongly disagree' etc. Therefore, the mean score indicates the tendency of parents' responses for each characteristic. Detailed discussions follow.

Frequency Counts and Mean Scores of Parents' Responses to Questions about their Child's Characteristics						
My child	1 Strongly agree (count)	2 Agree	3 Neither agree nor disagree	4 Disagree	5 Strongly disagree	Mean score
Shares ¹⁵ .	26	20	10	4	2	1.86
Is kind.	83	85	8	0	0	1.57
Is polite.	65	98	15	0	0	1.72
Is helpful	82	84	11	2	0	1.63
Is honest	57	94	20	7	0	1.87
Is funny.	93	69	10	2	0	1.55
Is curious.	104	51	8	11	0	1.57
Is selfish.	6	27	44	74	22	3.46
Is happy.	122	58	0	0	0	1.32
Is caring.	107	67	4	1	0	1.44
Is naughty.	15	52	54	37	14	2.90
Is thoughtful.	51	96	27	3	1	1.92
Is shy.	13	52	44	47	18	3.03

My child shares

Although all parents were generally positive about their children's sharing behaviour those with a **single child** (mean response 2.1) were less so than those parents whose children had siblings (1.8).

There is some evidence that might suggest that parents **having younger children**, although positive about their children's sharing behaviour generally, were less positive than parents having slightly older children. Although some studies have suggested that very young children e.g. one-year-olds displayed considerable amount of sharing behaviour and the behaviour gradually declined after 2 years of age, the data shown here suggests that the parents' perception contradicted this but may suggest that the older children (three to four)

¹⁵ Each characteristic was derived from the responses the parents gave during the discussion groups and interviews.

have begun to learn about and consider the complexities in the processes of sharing. But it is also possible that these parents may have had higher expectations of their children's sharing behaviours than those whose children were younger.

**Parents' responses about their children's sharing behaviour
in relation to children's age.**

Age of child	Mean response
Under 3 years	2.2
3 years to 3 years 5 months	1.9
3 years 6 months to 3 years 11 months	1.8
4 years old and above	1.7

My child is kind

When **parents' age and gender** are taken into account simultaneously, it appears that **younger parents** were more likely to be positive about their child being kind than older parents, and that **fathers** were more likely to be positive about their child being kind than mothers.

**Parents responses about their child being kind when parents'
age and gender are taken into account simultaneously**

Parent age	Parent gender	
	Mother	Father
21 to 30 years	1.5	1.0
31 to 40 years	1.6	1.2
41 to 50 years	1.7	1.9

My child is helpful.

There is some evidence showing that the London **Montessori** parents, although positive about their children being helpful (mean response 2.0), were less positive than Kent (1.67) or other London settings (1.56). Similarly, the parents' age seems to relate to their responses about children's helpfulness. **Older parents** (41 to 50 years olds), although positive about their children being helpful (mean response 1.9), were less positive than younger parents aged 31-40 (1.69) and aged 21-30 (1.34). The possible explanation for this is that Montessori parents or older parents might have a higher expectation about their children's helpfulness than those in the other settings or younger age groups.

My child is honest

There is some evidence showing that **mothers**, although positive about their child being honest, were less positive (1.92) than fathers (1.54).

My child is caring

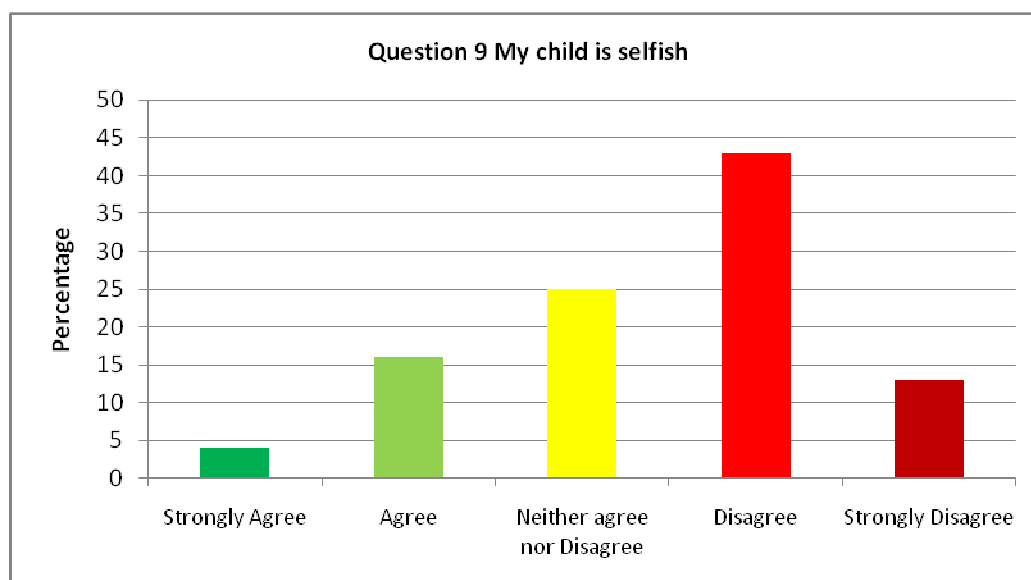
There is some evidence showing that parents with a **postgraduate degree**, although positive about their children being caring, were less positive (mean responses 1.62) than parents with a degree (1.37) or other qualification (1.27). However, it does not seem to apply to parents who had qualifications below A-level.

My child is thoughtful

There is some evidence that **mothers**, although positive about their children being thoughtful, were less positive (1.96) than fathers (1.62). It is suspected that the mothers might have a higher expectation of their child's thoughtful behaviour; or may have opportunities to spend more time with their children, e.g. full time parents, consequently, they may be able to observe closely a wider range of their child's behaviours. Therefore, mothers may score their child's thoughtful behaviour more conservatively.

My child is selfish

Looking simply at the percentage responses for each category as a whole, it was found that the ratings were spread across different categories. 43% of the parents disagreed with the statement and 13% strongly disagreed; 25% neither agreed nor disagreed, 16% agreed, and 4% strongly agreed. One parent wrote on the questionnaire that her child was, '...capable of being selfish but learning to consider others and becoming less focussed on her own needs' (L3, M10). The 'selfish' characteristic appears to be unpredictable.



Using regression modelling, the best model to explain the parents' responses about their child being selfish was found to be the type of setting. There is some evidence that **Montessori** parents (mean responses 2.79) were more likely to say their children were selfish than Kent (3.51) or other London parents (3.52). 'Selfish' is a negative label and some parents may have found this question troublesome, regardless of their views of their

children's characteristics. It is suspected that Montessori parents may feel more comfortable or confident about acknowledging selfish behaviour, or that their understanding of 'being selfish' is different from that of the Kent or other London parents. Alternatively, it is also possible that the Montessori children were indeed more selfish than Kent or other London children!

My child is naughty/shy

Reminiscent of the responses to the selfish characteristic, the responses to the characteristics of naughty and shy were spread out across the rating scale categories. Furthermore, the highest rate of missing data (4%) was found in the responses to the item, 'my child is naughty' seeming showing some parents' reluctance, refusal or difficulty in scoring this statement. The item appeared to have been provocative, having attracted a number of comments that were written on the side of the questionnaire. Some examples are shown below:

The 'naughty' spells are usually to do with tiredness or not listening because something else is more interesting. Not characteristics or issues, just her age. (K1, P8)

For the most part, he is very good and kind to others, equally there are times when I have seen him kicking/hitting others for no good reasons – but these incidences are rare. (K2, K8)

[He has] better behaved outside i.e. park and supermarket. (L1, L22)

Has been more shy and introverted since starting nursery. (L2, R59)

It was also possible that parents had different understandings of the usage of the term.

Naughty or just learning boundaries? (K2, K14)

Using regression modelling, it appeared that parents whose **children had siblings** were less likely to say their children were naughty (mean responses 2.97) than parents with a single child (2.74). Also, parents in **Kent** settings were less likely to say their children were naughty (3.1) than London parents (2.82). It is possible that the London children may experience more social conflicts than their peers in Kent and consequently may manifest more frequently behaviours that are deemed to be 'naughty', such as hitting, kicking or snatching.

Regarding shyness, there is some evidence that the **Montessori** parents were more likely to say their child was not shy (3.57) than parents in Kent (3.33) and other London settings (2.83).

In their comments written on questionnaires, a few parents suggested that their children show 'all of these things sometimes! (K1, P10)' and 'all the answers above are as much as can be expected from a 2, 3, 4-year-old (K1, P5)'. Other characteristics or behaviours or dispositions that the parents mentioned about their children in their written comments

were 'manners (K1, P8)', 'likes to be in conversation, (K2, K10)', 'boisterous and active, (K2, K18)', 'affectionate, (L2, R31; L1, L3)', 'independent and strong willed (L2, R47)', 'friendly, (L1, L13)' and 'sociable, (L1, L31)'.

Using Principal Component Analysis (PCA) to analyse the differences between respondents in this set of data, two components were found. However, it needs to be firstly noted that the Learning for Life early years parent questionnaire was based on the results from parents' group discussions, parent interviews and literature reviews. The questions listed should not be regarded as an exhaustive list

Principal Component One (PC1) – *General positiveness*

PC1 shows that parents were generally positive about all the statements in this set of questions. The degree of emphasis placed on each question can be seen from the component loadings shown in Appendix 5.1a. Those with the higher loadings contribute more to the differences between parents.

Principal Component Two (PC2) – *Energetic, loving and upbeat mood versus social- bound characteristics*

To look beyond parents' general positiveness, the second principal component shows a contrast outlook between two groups. One is the group of parents who favour a set of statements showing children's *energetic, loving and upbeat mood characteristics*, for instance being naughty, caring, curious, being funny, being happy and not shy. In this case, 'being naughty' may not be necessarily regarded as negative and undesirable. A naughty child is likely to be viewed as energetic and explorative. The other group is those parents who were relatively more positive to a set of questions in relation to *social bound characteristics*, for example, being kind, polite, honest, being helpful, sharing, and not selfish. These groups can be identified from the component loadings in Appendix 5.1b.

4.2 Parents' aspirations for their child's character when she/he is an adult

There were 13 items on the 'ideal' character questions. The data-missing rate was 1%. The highest missing rate was in response to the statement, 'I hope my child will be selfish' (4%). There were no missing responses on the item, 'I hope my child will be kind.'

Using ordinal logistic regression models, frequency counts and mean score for each item are listed below. Detailed discussions follow.

**Frequency counts and mean scores of parents' responses to the question
'What you hope your child will be like as an adult'**

	1 Strongly agree (count)	2 Agree	3 Neither agree nor disagree	4 Disagree	5 Strongly disagree	Mean score
Fun loving	95	76	6	1	0	1.5
Happy	147	32	0	0	0	1.2
Kind.	137	43	0	0	0	1.2
Honest.	138	41	0	0	0	1.2
Respectful	139	40	0	0	0	1.2
Religious	42	39	79	12	5	2.4
Confident	128	49	1	0	0	1.3
Caring/loving	139	40	0	0	0	1.2
Successful	88	76	14	0	0	1.6
Well-educated	108	63	8	0	0	1.4
Selfish	3	5	19	53	93	4.2
Hard-working	92	77	9	0	0	1.5
Responsible	118	60	1	0	0	1.4

I hope my child be religious when (s)he is an adult.

Kent parents were less positive about the statement (3.04) than London parents (2.2). The London settings had a much wider variety of parents' religious affiliations than the Kent settings. Some religions may be stricter than others with regards to the children's religious upbringing and associated parental expectations and aspirations for the future. There are three speculations here. One is that the parents in London either themselves were religious or their religions were strict and, therefore, they hoped their children would be religious as well in the future. The other possibility is that Kent parents were more flexible or willing to allow their children to choose whether they wanted to become religious or not. Finally, the Kent parents may simply have different understandings of the concepts of being religious.

There is some evidence that **parents whose child (at the setting) was a boy** were less positive about this statement (2.56) than parents whose child was a girl (2.27). It is suspected that parents might have different expectations for boys and girls. However, it is difficult to interpret the reasons why parents felt less positive about boys being religious than girls at this stage. The findings offer a tantalising conundrum about the different parents' general conceptions of 'being religious', and the different the possibly gendered constructions of a 'religious boy' and a 'religious girl'.

Older parents aged between 41 to 50 seemed less positive about the statement (2.76) than those in the age groups 31 to 40 (2.52) or 21 to 30 (2.02). Parents with a **postgraduate degree** were less positive about the statement (2.93) than the parents with a degree (2.37) or certificate (2.30) or below A level (2.30).

I hope my child will be successful.

Although **Kent parents** were positive about this statement, they were less positive (1.96) than London parents (1.44). Being successful is a positive label. However, it can also be argued or interpreted in different dimensions, for example, materially or spiritually as well as in relative/comparative terms. Kent parents' conservative responses may possibly indicate that they considered the statement to be complex. This statement attracted written comments including the following, by a parent in Kent, which asked, 'Successful? In her chosen objectives. I think this is a very relative term. (K1, P8)'

I hope my child will be well-educated

Kent parents, although positive about this statement, were less positive (1.78) than London parents (1.32). Once again, Kent parents may consider this concept more complex than London parents.

I hope my child will be selfish.

Although parents felt negative about their children being selfish, **mothers** seemed to feel slightly more negative (4.37) than fathers (4.0). However, some parents, who wrote comments on the questionnaire, questioned the meaning of 'selfish'. A parent who chose to 'strongly disagree' with this item wrote on the questionnaire,

'I don't think selfish is a good value in itself. But that doesn't mean one should not think about one's self [?], know how to please oneself [?] and try to get the best for oneself [?]. I do not call this being selfish, and I do not necessarily approve of someone who would systematically put others before themselves. (K1, P5)

I hope my child will be hard working.

Although **Montessori** parents were positive about this statement, they were less positive (1.93) than Kent (1.57) or other London parents (1.47). The Montessori parents' comparative social and economic advantages may have been a factor that influenced their responses to this item. But it is also possible that the parents had different understandings of the phrase 'hard-working' and more research would be needed to clarify this finding.

According to PCA, two components were found. The component loadings can be found in Appendix 5.2a and 5.2b.

Principal Component One (PC1) –*General positiveness*

Principal Component Two (PC2)- *Success orientation versus moral orientation*

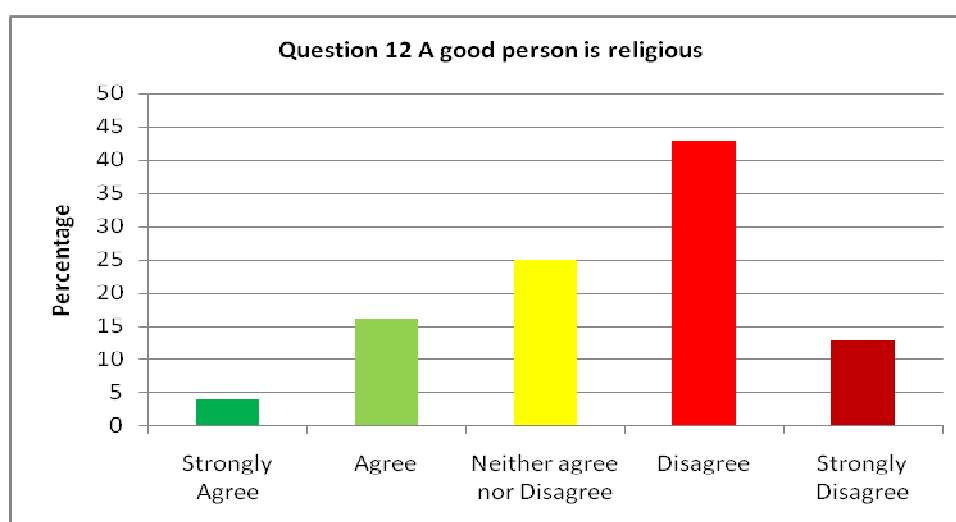
Again, PC1 shows that parents seemed to be positive about most of the statements. Looking beyond PC1, PC2 indicates a contrasting view. On the one hand it shows those parents who gave relatively more positive responses to statements about 'success orientation', for example, being successful, well-educated, hard-working, responsible, confident, selfish and religious. In this case, the characteristic of being selfish would be conditional and subject to

the consideration of relevant factors. Being selfish may not necessarily have negative associations and is likely to involve more complex constructs.

In contrast, the PC2 also shows those parents who responded relatively more positively to statements within a 'moral orientation', for example a set of characteristics that demonstrate moral concern: respectful to others, honest, caring, loving, kind and being happy.

4.3 Parents' views on a 'good' person

There were 13 items on parents' views of a 'good' person. The data-missing rate was 2.5%. The highest missing rate was for statement, 'A good person is religious' (4%). The lowest one was for, 'A good person is kind' and 'honest' (1%). The greatest proportion of parents neither agreed nor disagreed (44%) that, 'A good person is religious', and similar proportions of parents strongly agreed and agreed (28%), or strongly disagreed and disagreed (27%). A similar pattern occurred in the responses to, 'A good person is successful' and 'A good person is well-educated'.



Based on ordinal logistic regression models, frequency counts and mean scores for the parents responses to each characteristic are listed below. Detailed discussions follow.

**Frequency counts and mean scores of parents' responses to
'the characteristics of a good person'**

A good person is	1 Strongly agree (count)	2 Agree	3 Neither agree nor disagree	4 Disagree	5 Strongly disagree	Mean score
Respectful	127	47	3	0	0	1.3
Happy	56	63	38	16	2	2.1
Kind	113	59	5	1	0	1.4
Honest	121	55	2	0	0	1.3

Fun loving	49	60	51	13	1	2.1
Religious	22	27	76	24	23	3.0
Confident	52	45	48	25	4	2.3
Caring	108	58	9	2	0	1.5
Hard-working	60	64	37	14	1	2.1
Well-educated	41	26	59	34	15	2.8
Selfish	7	4	22	53	88	4.2
Successful	29	33	64	35	14	2.8
Responsible	79	78	18	2	0	1.7

A good person is happy

There is sketchy evidence to suggest that perhaps **Montessori parents** were less positive (2.5) about this statement than parents in Kent settings (2.35) or other London settings (1.96). Taking into account the social and economic differences between the Montessori parents and the other two groups (Kent and other London settings), it is suspected that social and economic advantage may influence their views on this item.

A good person is fun loving, religious, confident, hard working, well-educated and successful

There is some evidence that **Kent** parents were less positive about these statements than London parents. The mean scores for each item can be found below.

The comparison of mean scores between Kent and London settings

A good person is	Kent	London
Religious	3.49	2.8
Fun-loving	2.45	2.07
Confident	2.85	2.13
Hard-working	2.37	1.92
Well-educated	3.37	2.51
Successful	3.37	2.63

A good person is selfish

Although the London parents were negative about this statement, there is some evidence that they were less negative (4.09) than Kent parents (4.53); and that **fathers** seemed to be less negative about it (3.83) than mothers (4.27).

Other findings that should be noted are that **Mothers** seemed to feel less positive about the statement, 'A good person is happy' (2.17) than fathers (1.79). It is not clear whether the stereotypical image of females being more sympathetic may have brought about this result. If it is so, it is also possible that they may experience a greater struggle when they try to be 'good'. Consequently, they may feel less positive about a good person being happy.

Mothers seemed to be less positive about 'A good person is fun-loving' (2.24) than fathers (1.79); and also less positive about 'A good person is confident' (2.41) than fathers (1.83).

Finally, older parents aged between 41 and 50 were less positive about 'A good person is religious' (3.34) than parents aged 31 to 40 (3.07), or 21 to 30 (2.58).

Based on PCA, two principal components were found. The component loadings can be found in Appendix 5.3a and 5.3b.

Principal Component One (PC1) – *General positiveness*

Principal Component Two (PC2) – *Success orientation versus moral orientation*

PC1 shows that parents were generally positive about most of the statements. Looking beyond PC1, PC2 reveal a contrasting view. On the one hand, it shows those parents who gave relatively more positive responses to statements relating to 'Success orientation, e.g. a good person is successful, selfish, well-educated, religious and confident. On the other hand, it shows those parents who responded relatively more positively to statements in relation to 'moral orientation', e.g. a good person is honest, respectful, caring, kind, and responsible.

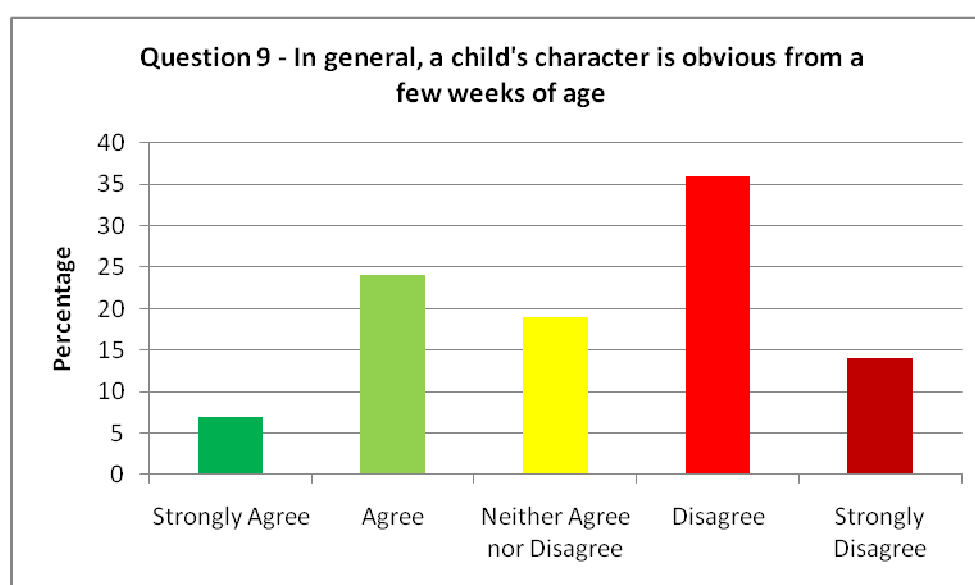
4.4 Parents' views about character development

There were 10 items within this group. The average missing rate for responses in this section was 3.5%, which were all found in questionnaires returned by parents from the London settings. The questions which had the highest missing rate (4%) were (a child's character) 'is obvious from a few weeks of age', 'is the same at 2 years as at 1 year old', 'changes from one day to the next', and 'is inherited from her/his parents.' For the purposes of reporting, the questions have been grouped under 4 headings:

- a. In general, a child's character is obvious from a few weeks of age.
- b. Change or development of a child's character
 - Is the same at 2 years as at 1 year old?
 - Does s/he change as s(he) gets older?
 - Does s/he change from one day to the next?
 - Will be different when s(he) is an adult?
- c. Any specific character, which may be linked with nature.
 - Is inherited from her/his parents?
 - Is unique?
 - Has aspects that can not be changed?
- d. Any influential period or factor in character development
 - Is fully developed before starting school?
 - Is shaped by people around her/him?

a) In general, a child's character is obvious from a few weeks of age.

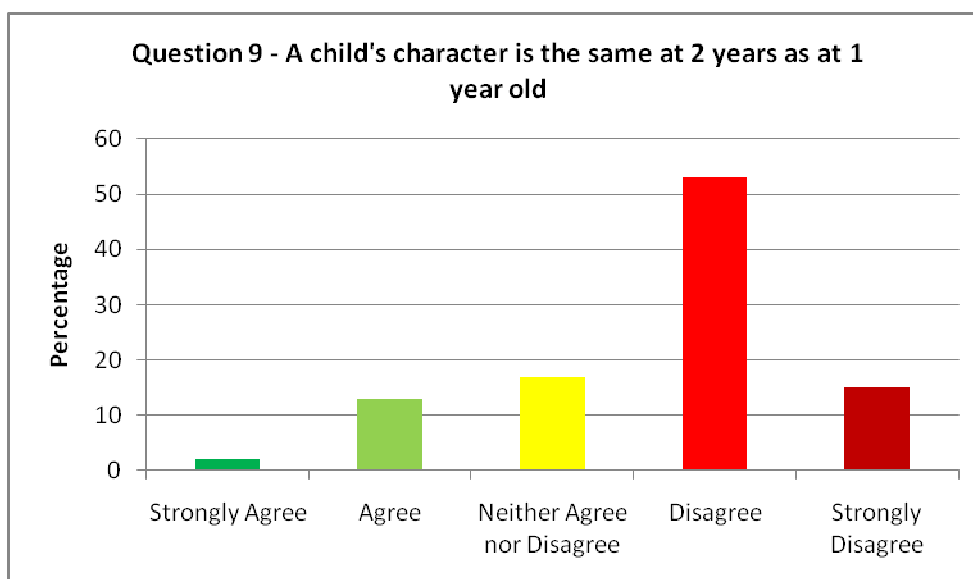
50% of the parents either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement; 19% neither agreed nor disagreed with it; and 37% parents either agreed or strongly agreed with it. There appeared to be a considerable number of the parents who felt that they were able to identify a certain, obvious character in their child when he or she was as young as a few weeks of age, but half of the parents were not able to. However, it is necessary to consider the parents' conceptualization of 'character'. For example, one parent marked the word 'character' and wrote, 'character? Or c.f. behaviour' on the questionnaire (K1, P8). Another commented, 'what do you mean by character? Morality? Personality? (L3, M3). Another parent wrote, 'my son seems robust, confident and full of character. I'm pleased, (L2, R8)'. It was possible that different conceptualisations of character may have led the parents to consider the statements and respond to them in different ways.



Using ordinal logistic regression models, there is some evidence that the parents with a **single child** seemed to feel more positive about this statement (2.98) than parents whose child had siblings (3.38). The frequency counts and mean scores can be found in Appendix 5.4

b) Change or development of a child's character

68% parents either disagreed or strongly disagreed that, 'A child's character is the same at 2 years as at 1 year old.' 17% neither agreed nor disagreed and 15% either strongly agreed or agreed with the statement. It appeared that the majority of the parents had observed a certain degree of change in their child's character development during this period.



87% parents either strongly agreed or agreed that, 'A child's character changes as (s)he gets older'. 8% neither disagreed nor agreed, and 5% either strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statement.

However, changes in the development of a child's character may differ from one to the next. 48% of the parents either disagreed or strongly disagreed that 'A child's character changes from one day to the next', while 31% parents (who either agreed or strongly agreed) may have observed considerable change in a child's character over a short period. 25% of the parents neither agreed nor disagreed with this statement, which prompted written comments, including the following:

I think some aspects such as energy, enthusiasm, curiosity can be encouraged and developed. But my 2 children showed characteristics as babies that they still exhibit now. I think a child with some strong character traits may exhibit them within a few weeks and still show them years later. However, I feel nurture influences nature. (K1, P8)

Using ordinal logistic regression models, there is some evidence that **Kent parents** seemed to be less positive (3.69) about the question 'A child's character changed from one day to the next' than London parents (2.95).

45% of parents either strongly agreed or agreed that 'A child's character will be different when s(he) is an adult', 39% neither agreed nor disagreed, and 16% either strongly disagreed or disagreed.

c) Any specific character, which may be linked with nature.

46% of parents either strongly agreed or agreed that, 'A child's character is inherited from her/his parents', while 39% neither agreed nor disagreed and 15% either strongly disagreed

or disagreed. One parent commented that, 'I believe some is inherited, some shaped, but most comes from the child itself.' (K2, K8).

The majority of the parents (84%) believed 'A child's character is unique'. A parent wrote on her questionnaire:

I have 2 children and [they have] very different personalities. [So I] would think some things are unique, some inherited, some environmental. (L2, R3)

49% of the parents either strongly agreed or agreed that, 'There are some aspects of a child's character that can not be changed'. In contrast, 31% had an opposite view, while 20% neither agreed nor disagreed with this statement. Once again, some parents chose to write comments, one of which said:

I think you cannot 'change' certain aspects but you can make them a positive instead of a negative. (An 'active' child has to be taught to channel his energy on something). Instead of trying to cancel some of his energy, I believe that any trait of personality can evolve into something good or 'useful' in an adult. We shouldn't try to change them but we should help them make the most of who they are. (K1, P5)

d) Any influential period or factor on character development

53% of parents either strongly disagreed or disagreed that, 'A child's character is fully developed before starting school' but 25% had an opposite view. 21% neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement and parents who had disagreed wrote on the questionnaire:

I believe the formative years are very important in character development but that there is still scope for character change afterwards. (L3, M10)

I would say that a child changes over night but as time goes on and they get older, I think a child's character is developed before school but changes as they get through the school years. (L1, L30)

The majority of the parents either strongly agreed or agreed (84%) that 'A child's character is shaped by people around her/him'. 12% neither agreed nor disagreed and while just 3% disagreed with the statement. Yet again, parents chose to add comments, including the statement below from a London parent:

A child learns and changes. They are influenced by people, religion and circumstances, (L1, L22).

Using Principal Component Analysis, one component was found. The component loading can be seen in Appendix 5.5. This component shows a contrasting view between those parents who were relatively more positive about a set of questions indicating *environmental effect on character* for example, a child's character 'is shaped by people around her/him', 'changes as (s)he gets older', 'will be different when(s)he is an adult' and 'changes from one day to the next'; and those parents who were relatively more positive about a set of

questions indicating *early manifestation of characteristics* for example, a child's character 'is obvious from a few weeks of age' and 'has some aspects that can not be changed' and 'is the same at 2 years as at 1 year old'.

A parent's comments provide useful illustration to end this sub-section.

Struggling slightly with what is character? What is behaviour? Aspects of character seem more apparent early on, but feel that some events definitely knock children's confidence or boost it even when they may typically be shy. Some aspects seem inherited, others not. As an older adult you might have confidence you never had as a younger adult. (L2, R31)

4.5 Parents' views about early childhood education purposes and uses

There were 12 items that explored the parents' views about the purposes and uses (from their perspective) of early childhood education. The average missing data rate was 5%. The questions that had the highest missing data rate included 'go out to work' (13%) and 'have a break' (14%). Other relatively high missing rate questions were 'learn to be well behaved' (7%), 'can learn respect' (6%) and 'learn good manners' (6%). From the patterns of some parents' responses to all the items in this part of the questionnaire, it appeared that some may have been inclined simply to tick a vertical line of boxes. While some also chose 'strongly agree' to represent a 'yes' answer, they sometimes left a box blank to represent a 'no' answer (illuminated by comments they added) for the first two items, in particular. It was possible that, to begin with, some parents were not familiar with the matrix-style format of the questionnaire statements and response options (this section was the first to be set out in this way on the questionnaire). They either did not agree or were not sure about it; therefore, they left it blank.

Using ordinal logistic regression models, frequency counts and mean scores are listed below.

Frequency counts and mean scores of parents' responses to the reasons of their children attending ECE settings

	1 Strongly agree (count)	2 Agree	3 Neither agree nor disagree	4 Disagree	5 Strongly disagree	Mean score
I can go out to work	41	29	26	26	34	2.9
I can have a break	18	53	27	33	23	2.9
(S)he can meet other children	124	48	4	2	1	1.4
(S)he can learn to read/write	69	59	30	13	3	2.0
(S)he can get ready for school	108	58	11	1	0	1.5
(S)he can learn	65	73	23	7	2	1.9

respect						
(S)he can learn good manners	58	73	27	9	3	2.0
(S)he can become more independent	110	59	8	2	0	1.5
(S)he can learn to be well behaved	63	62	33	6	4	2.0
(S)he can learn to share	90	71	11	2	3	1.6
(S)he can learn to be responsible	74	71	22	4	2	1.8
(s)he can learn to be confident	108	61	3	2	2	1.5

I can go out to work

There is some evidence showing that parents who had a **single child** were more positive about this question (mean responses 2.3) than parents whose child had siblings (3.14).

Parents who had **younger children** aged under 3 years seemed to be more positive about the question (2.35) than parents who had older children aged 3 years to 3 years 5 months (2.68), or 3 years 6 months to 3 years 11 months (3.44). However, this did not apply for the group of parents who had children aged 4 years and above. Interpretation of this finding should be cautious. Although the parents of the youngest children (who were more positive in their responses than others) appeared to see the ECE settings as enabling them to go out to work, no assumptions should be made about their desires to stay at home with their child (or not). Financial considerations may have influenced these and other parents' decisions and their contingent responses to this statement.

There is some evidence that **London parents** (2.39) seemed to be more positive about this question than Kent parents (3.77) or Montessori parents (3.83); that **fathers** were more positive about it (2.32) than mothers (2.99). It is suspected that the dominant pattern of women as primary carers may play a part in this difference. Finally, parents who were **employed full-time** were more positive about it (2.06) than the parents who said they were a student (2.09) or who had part-time employment (2.61), as well as those who said they were unemployed (2.94) or full-time parents/carers (3.84).

S(h)e can meet other children

Kent parents appeared to be more positive about this statement (1.24) than London parents (1.42). It is possible that the Kent parents gave more thought to the importance of children's social development.

S(h)e can learn to read/write

There was some evidence that **London parents** seemed to be more positive about this statement (1.79) than Kent parents (2.46). As parents in Kent wrote:

Reading and writing we also do at home. It is not the primary reason to attend nursery. but nursery input helps her enthusiasm (very much) (K1, P8)

Reading and writing can be taught at primary/Reception rather than nursery. (K2, K14)

S(h)e can learn to be confident

Some evidence showed that **Kent parents** seemed to be more positive about the statement (1.24) than London parents (1.54).

Based on PCA, two components were found. The component loadings can be found in Appendix 5.6a and 5.6b.

Principal Component One (PC1) – *General positiveness*

Principal Component Two (PC2)- *Social and independent perspectives versus readiness for school perspectives*

Looking beyond PC1, PC2 marginally indicates two contrasting views. On the one hand, it shows those parents who were slightly more positive about a set of questions concerned with children's social and independent development, for example, the importance of meeting other children, becoming confident and independent and parents can have a break. On the other hand, it shows those parents who were slightly more positive about a set of questions in relation to children's readiness for school, for example, the emphasis on learning to read and write, good manners, and preparation for school.

4.6 Parents' views about factors that influence a child's character (and its development)

There were 11 statements in this section. The average missing data rate was 5%. The highest missing rate was for the 'sisters/brothers' question (10%), followed by 'people at a place of worship' (8%) and 'nobody influences my child's values' (7%). The statement about 'a child's 'mother' had the lowest missing data rate (2%). It was possible that the statements with a higher missing data rate were ones that parents had felt were not applicable to them e.g. 'no sisters/brothers' (parent's comment, L1, K15), or 'we don't go to a place of worship' (parent's comment, L3, M14).

A few findings using descriptive statistics are presented.

98% of parents strongly agreed or agreed that 'self / mother influences my child's values'.

94% of parents strongly agreed or agreed that 'self / father influences my child's values'.

84% of parents strongly agreed or agreed that 'grandparents influence my child's values'.

83% of parents strongly agreed or agreed that 'sisters/brothers influence my child's values'.

Using ordinal logistic regression models, frequency counts and mean scores for the statements are shown in Appendix 5.7. Other detailed discussions follow.

Self /Mother influences my child's values

There is some evidence that **London parents**, although positive about this question, seemed less positive (1.33) than Kent parents (1.08). It is suspected that the family structure or

relationships or dynamics may have been more complex in London families than Kent ones. Therefore, there are some conservative or diverse responses on the mother's influence.

Self/ father influences my child's values

Although **London parents** were positive about this statement some evidence suggests that they seemed to be less positive (1.57) than Kent parents (1.29); that **mothers**, although positive, were less positive (1.46) than fathers (1.12); that parents with a **single child** seemed to feel less positive (1.57) about this statement than parents whose child had siblings (1.29).

Other family members influence my child's values

London parents seemed to be more positive about this statement (1.98) than Kent parents (2.23).

The people on TV influence my child's values.

There is some evidence that **Kent** parents seemed to be less positive about this statement (2.71) than London parents (2.49); that **mothers** seemed to be less positive about it (2.59) than fathers (2.29).

People at a place of worship

Kent parents seemed to be less positive about this statement (3.29) than London parents (2.98).

Nobody influences my child's values

There is some evidence that **Kent parents** seemed to be less positive about this statement (4.6) than London parents (4.04).

4.7 Parents' views of their interactions with their own children at home

This section consisted of 13 statements. The average rate for missing data was 2%. The highest rate (3%) was for the statement, 'I try to explain my feelings to my child'.

Using ordinal logistic regression models, frequency counts and mean are listed below.

Frequency counts and mean scores of parents' responses to the statements about their interactions with their child at home are listed below.

	1 Strongly agree (count)	2 Agree	3 Neither agree nor disagree	4 Disagree	5 Strongly disagree	Mean score
I usually set good examples for my child	87	87	4	0	0	1.5
My child copies my words and actions	70	93	10	3	1	1.7

I find it hard to say 'sorry' to my child	3	7	4	64	98	4.4
I try to explain my feelings to my child	61	100	9	5	0	1.8
My child must sit at the table for meals	63	76	31	7	0	1.9
I explain right and wrong to my child	114	62	1	1	0	1.4
My child doesn't know when I'm sad	5	16	27	86	42	3.8
I talk to my child about others' feelings	71	93	7	4	1	1.7
I introduce my child to other cultures	47	80	40	9	1	2.1
I spend 'quality time' with my child	100	74	4	0	0	1.5
I often try to read or tell stories or sing to my child	123	49	5	0	1	1.4
I explain that snatching toys is wrong	110	59	3	2	2	1.5
My views about parents are generally the same as other parents I know	30	87	44	13	2	2.3

I usually set good examples for my child.

There is some evidence that **Montessori parents**, although positive about this statement, were less positive (2.0) than Kent parents (1.63) or other London parents (1.43). It is suspected that either Montessori parents are aware (and reported) that they sometimes do not set good examples for their children for various reasons (possibly they have a higher expectation for themselves), or that the Montessori parents reported their own behaviour in a more realistic way than others, or that they actually set good examples less often than other parents did.

I find it hard to say 'sorry' to my child.

There is some evidence to suggest that although fathers disagreed with this question, they were slightly more positive (4.29) than mothers (4.42). It is suspected that male adults may embrace a traditional 'father' image of authority and power, possibly making it more difficult for them to apologise to a young child.

My child must sit at the table for meals

Kent parents seemed to feel more positive about this question (1.76) than London parents (1.95).

I talk to my child about others' feelings

Kent parents seemed to feel more positive about this question (1.53) than London parents (1.95). It is possible that the Kent parents were slightly more aware of or concerned with their child's social and emotional development than London parents. Readers are reminded that it was reported earlier that Kent parents were also more positive about their child attending an ECE setting so they could meet other children as well as to learn to be more confident.

I introduce my child to other cultures

Kent parents seemed to feel less positive about this question (2.41) than London parents (1.95). London is a multi-cultural city. It is possible that London parents have more opportunities to offer their children multi-cultural experiences. But the evidence cannot show whether or not the Kent parents were also less inclined to do so than London parents. **Mothers** seemed less positive about this question (2.12) than fathers (1.79).

My views about parenting are generally the same as other parents I know

Kent parents seemed to feel more positive about this statement (2.02) than London parents (2.35). It is suspected that the Kent parents are relatively homogenous group in terms of ethnicity, religion and culture whereas the London parents are more diverse. The Kent parents (living in small, rural communities) may be more likely to have or develop similar ideas about parenting or have more opportunities to share their own experiences with other parents.

Based on PCA, one component was found. The component loading can be found in Appendix 5.8. The component shows a contrasting view. On the one hand, parents were relatively more positive about a set of questions in relation to *a contemporary view of parenting*, for example, modelling, talking about feelings, explaining right and wrong, sharing quality time, introducing different cultural ideas / experiences and setting boundaries. On the other hand, it shows those parents who were relatively more positive about a set of questions relating to *traditional views of adults*, for example, 'My child doesn't know when I am sad' and 'I find it hard to say sorry to my child.'. It appears to present a rather hierarchical stance and view young children as minors who are less able to be sensitive to others' feelings.

The next Section of the report provides an overview of the main findings from the analysis of responses to a professionals' questionnaire, which was completed by practitioners in the six ECE settings.

5. Young children's character development - The professionals' perspectives

The Learning for Life Early Years questionnaire for professionals¹⁶ (all staff working in the early childhood education settings) was based on the content and structure of the parents' questionnaire (originally from the parents' discussion group and parents' interviews). Following early interviews with staff in the six sample settings, a few sections were modified in order to explore professionals' views on character development and ECE, characteristics of children who enrolled in their settings, their practice in supporting character development, and factors that might influence a young child's character and its development.

The questionnaires (Appendix 4) were administered to all staff in the six settings and completion was voluntary. Those who responded either returned the questionnaire by handing it back to the researcher or posted it back to the research centre themselves using the freepost envelope provided. 32 out of 50 questionnaires were returned, yielding a return rate of 64%.

The questionnaire comprised seven demographic questions and 92 items (grouped into seven sections) which were answered on a Likert-type scale from 1 to 5, with 1 being 'strongly agree' and 5 'strongly disagree'. All the data was entered into SPSS 16.0 statistical package. The relevant methods, descriptive statistics, principal component analyses and ordinal logistic regression models were applied as described in Section 10. The findings are discussed within the following seven sub-sections:

1. Professionals' views about children's characteristics
2. Professionals' views about a 'good' person.
3. Professionals' views of character development
4. Professionals' views about the purposes of Early Childhood Education
5. Professionals' opinions about parents' use of Early Childhood Education
6. Professionals' views about factors that influence a child's character and its development
7. Professionals' views on their own practice in the settings

Before reporting the findings, an overview of the respondents' backgrounds is presented. As a whole, 66% of the respondents worked in London settings and 34% in Kent. 94% were female and 6 % were male; 62% worked full time and 38% part time. Regarding job titles, 28% of respondents described themselves as nursery heads, managers or deputy heads, 13% as teachers, 34% as teaching assistants, 19% as nursery nurses and 6% as administrators. The majority of respondents were between 30 to 50 years of including 47% aged 41 to 50, 34% aged 31 to 40, 6% aged 21 to 30 and 3% aged 15 to 20. The majority of respondents

¹⁶ The term 'professionals' is used to describe all the staff who worked in a setting, regardless of their status or qualifications. It should not be confused with the *Early Years Professional Status* award.

said they were White British (72%) or other White background (9%). With regard to their religions, 31% identified their faith as Church of England, 16% Catholicism, 16% other Christian, 6% Islam, 13% no religion, 3% other religions, 3% preferred not to say and missing data represented 13% of the respondents. Finally, 63% had early years qualifications, 6% below A-level, 22% having a degree and 9% having a postgraduate degree.

5.1 Professionals' views about children's characteristics

There were 16 items within this section. The average data-missing rate was 4.9%. The statements, 'The children in the nursery are naughty' and 'the children in the nursery are selfish' had the highest missing data rate (12.5%), which was the same as the parent questionnaire. This gives rise to a methodological issue concerning the effectiveness of methods or instruments for gathering evidence about attitudes to particular issues. As was explained in Section 10, the questionnaires' items were partly derived from interviews and discussion groups. During these initial enquiries, both parents and professionals initiated and appeared comfortable with discussions about the children's behaviour, which they sometimes described as 'naughty' or 'selfish'. Hence, these terms were included in the questionnaire items. However, it appears that both groups were less comfortable with or unwilling to state the extent to which they agreed or disagreed about children being 'naughty' or 'selfish' when they were presented with this in the questionnaires.

Performing ordinal logistic regression models, the predictors used were **region** (London and Kent), **individual settings** (A, B, C, D, E, F), **setting type** (London, Kent, Montessori), **gender** (female and male), **age** (15-20, 21-30, 31-40, 41-50 and 51-60), **work type** (full and part time), **qualifications** (below A level, certificate, degree, post graduate and early years qualification – any type), **ethnicity** and **religion**. The results, which have explanatory value, are discussed below.

Frequency counts and mean scores of professionals' responses to children's characteristics

Children in the nursery	1 Strongly agree (count)	2 Agree	3 Neither agree nor disagree	4 Disagree	5 Strongly disagree	Mean score
Share/take turns.	4	21	7	0	0	2.1
Are kind.	2	24	4	0	0	2.1
Are polite.	3	18	11	0	0	2.3
Are helpful	2	19	10	0	0	2.3
Are honest	3	19	7	0	0	2.1
Are funny.	3	22	7	0	0	2.1
Are curious.	13	15	2	1	0	1.7
Are selfish.	1	3	5	15	4	3.6
Are happy.	12	16	2	0	0	1.7
Are caring.	7	18	5	1	0	2.0
Are naughty.	0	1	8	11	8	3.9
Are thoughtful.	5	13	12	0	0	2.2
Are confident.	2	21	9	0	0	2.2

Are independent	3	18	11	0	0	2.3
Are responsible	16	10	5	0	0	2.7
Are cooperative	3	17	8	0	0	2.2

Children share/take turns

Although respondents in **London settings** were positive about the children's sharing behaviour, they seemed to be slightly less positive (mean response 2.3) about it than respondents in Kent (1.7).

Children are caring, independent, cooperative

Similar results were found for the characteristics caring, independent and cooperative. There is some evidence that respondents in **London**, although positive about the children having these characteristics, seemed to be less positive than Kent respondents.

The comparison between respondents in Kent and London settings

	Respondents in Kent (mean score)	Respondents in London
Children are caring	1.7	2.2
Children are independent	1.9	2.4
Children are cooperative	1.8	2.4

Children are selfish

Respondents in **Kent** settings seemed to be less likely to say that the children were **selfish** (4.09) than respondents in London (3.35). As a whole, 47% of them disagreed and 13% strongly disagreed about the children being selfish, 3% of them strongly agreed with it, 9% agreed, and 16% neither agreed nor disagreed. A professional's written comment was '*Selfish in a positive way*' (L1, L7).

Children are naughty

Many respondents either strongly disagreed (25%) or disagreed (34%) that the children in their settings were naughty. 25% of them neither agreed nor disagreed and 3% agreed. Respondents had some comments about a child being naughty. One written comment was, 'Naughty is not applicable.' (L1, L1) The other emphasized the need to clarify the meaning of this word, writing, 'I don't agree that children are generally naughty. This would need to be more specified.' (L2, R3)

Based on Principal Component Analysis (PCA), one component was found. On the whole, the respondents appeared to have a **generally positive view about the children** who attended their settings. As one professional commented '*I think all children have the attributes listed in one way or another. As opportunities/experiences in life arise they are able to demonstrate these abilities, sometimes needing support from others to develop these skills*' (K3, H2). The component loadings can be found in Appendix 6.1.

5.2 Professionals' views about a 'good' person

There were 14 items in this section. The missing data rate was 5.4%. The highest missing data rate was for the question 'A good person is selfish' (10%). From the findings of descriptive statistics, the majority of parents either strongly agreed or agreed with the statements 'A good person is respectful' (94%), 'is kind' (94%), 'is honest' (93%) and 'is caring' (87%). The results are similar to the parents' ratings.

Using ordinal logistic regression models to analyse this set of data, no model was found to fit in any variable.

Based on Principal Component Analysis (PCA), one component was found. It takes the form of a contrast between those parents who were relatively more positive about a set of questions in relation to *core values*, for example, 'A good person is kind, honest, caring, respectful to others, well-educated, fair, responsible and not selfish; and those parents who responded relatively more positively to a set of questions relating to *relative values*, for example, 'A good person is hard-working, religious and successful. The component loadings can be found in Appendix 6.2. However, from some respondents' written comments, the concept of 'good' can be hard to be defined.

Everyone has own ideas about good and bad (L1, L1)

People are too complicated to be defined as 'good' (L1, L9)

5.3 Professionals' views of character development

This section, which had a missing data rate of 5.5%, consisted of 13 items. The highest missing data rate was for the statement 'In general, a child's character is affected by what (s)he learns' (12.5%).

Descriptive statistics revealed that the majority of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that in general a child's character 'changes as (s)he gets older' (94%), 'is shaped by people around him/her' (94%), 'is unique' (93%), and 'affects the way (s)he learns'(90%).

Based on Principal Component Analysis, one component was found. The component loadings can be found in Appendix 6.3. The component reveals a contrasting view between respondents' responses. Some respondents were relatively more positive about a set of statements in relation to *the possibility of change in child's character*, for example, a child's character 'changes as (s)he gets older', 'will be different when (s)he is an adult', 'is shaped by people around her/him', 'is affected by what (s)he learns' and affects the way (s)he learns', and 'will be different at home and at nursery'. Others were relatively more positive to a set of statements seemingly viewing *a child's character as being stabilized in his or her early years*, for example, a child's character 'is obvious from a few weeks of age', 'is the same at 2 years as at 1 year old', and 'is fully developed before starting school.' These contrasting views were also evident in some of the respondents' written comments. One stated that a child's character 'is fully developed by the age of 6' (L3, M1); while another wrote that a child's character 'is constantly developing and changing according to the circumstances that they finds themselves as their life progresses' (K3, H2).

5.4 Professionals' views about the purposes of Early Childhood Education

There were 12 items in this section. The missing data rate was 3.4%. The descriptive statistics showed that *all* respondents either strongly agreed or agreed with the statements that the main purposes (of the ECE provision at their settings) were 'to allow children to meet other children', 'to help children learn to be confident' and 'to help children become more independent'. There were more diverse views about the statements 'to allow parents to go out to work', 'to give parents a break' and 'to allow children to learn to read and write'. For example, 34% respondents neither agreed nor disagreed that the purpose of provision was to help children to learn read and write, 9% strongly agreed, 31% agreed and 18% disagreed with it.

Using ordinal logistic regression models to analyse this set of data, no model was found to fit in any variable.

Performing Principal Component Analysis, two components were found.

Principal Component One (PC1) shows that respondents appeared to have a generally positive view about all the statements listed. The component loadings can be found in Appendix 6.4a and Appendix 6.4b.

Principal Component Two (PC2) – *Parental needs versus child development*

The Principal Component Two (PC2) looks beyond general positiveness to find the next major difference in responses. Respondents viewed the purposes of the provision in a contrasting way. On the one hand, one group of respondents were relatively more positive about a set of statements in relation to *parental needs*, for example, the provision can 'allow parents to go out to work', and 'to give parents a break'. On the other hand, the other group of respondents were relatively more positive about a set of statements relating to *children's development* in learning to be responsible, confident, more independent, able to share and respectful to others.

5.5 Professionals' opinions about parents' use of Early Childhood Education

There were 12 items in this section. The missing response rate was 2.3%. The descriptive statistics show patterns in the **respondents' perceptions of parents' purposes** in enrolling their children in ECE settings for a variety of purposes. These included 'to meet other children' (25% strongly agreed and 63% agreed), 13% of them neither agreed nor disagreed about the statement with similar patterns in responses for 'become more independent', 'be confident', 'get ready for school', 'be responsible', and 'be well-behaved.' However, the extent of agreement with these statements was somewhat lower than it had been when they had previously been asked about **their views of the main purposes** of ECE, in relation to the statements 'to meet other children', 'become more independent', 'be confident'

(decreasing from 100% for their views of main purposes to 88% for perceptions of parents' purposes).

Using ordinal logistic regression models, frequency counts and mean scores of this set of statements are listed below.

Frequency counts and mean scores of the statements about the reasons parents sent their children to ECE settings

Parents send their children to the nursery where you work so that	1 Strongly agree (count)	2 Agree	3 Neither agree nor disagree	4 Disagree	5 Strongly disagree	Mean score
They can go out to work	0	5	21	6	0	3.0
They can have a break	2	5	20	4	0	2.8
Their child can meet other children	8	20	4	0	0	1.9
Their child can learn to read/write	2	9	16	4	1	2.8
Their child can get ready for school	9	15	6	0	0	1.9
Their child can learn respect	4	12	12	3	0	2.5
Their child can learn good manners	6	12	13	0	0	2.2
Their child becomes more independent	10	16	6	0	0	1.9
Their child learns to be well behaved	6	14	11	1	0	2.2
Their child learns to share	9	12	11	0	0	2.1
Their child learns to be responsible	6	17	8	1	0	2.1
Their child learns to be confident	10	11	7	0	0	1.9

Respondents in the **Montessori setting** seemed to be more likely (mean response 1.5) to say that 'parents send their children to the nursery so that their child can learn to read and write' than respondents in other London settings (2.7), or Kent setting (3.2).

Respondents in **London settings**, although positive about the statement 'parents send their children to the nursery so that their child can learn to share', seemed to be less positive (2.3) than respondents in Kent (1.6).

Respondents in **London settings**, although positive about the statement 'parents send their children to the nursery so that their child can learn to be confident', seemed to be less positive (2.1) than respondents in Kent (1.4).

Full time respondents, although positive about the statements below, seemed to be less positive than part time respondents.

**Different Mean scores between full time and part time professional
on the relevant statements**

	Full time professionals	Part time professionals
Parents send their children to the nursery so that		
Their child can get ready for school	2.0	1.7
Their child learns to be responsible	2.3	1.9
Their child becomes more independent	2.1	1.6
Their child learns to be confident	2.1	1.6

Based on Principal Component Analysis, two components were found. The component loadings can be found in Appendix 6.5a and 6.5b.

Principal Component One (PC1) – *General positiveness versus parents’ need to work*

According to the professionals’ responses, PC1 shows a marginal contrasting view. On the one hand, it indicates those respondents who were relatively more positive about most of the statements listed. On the other hand, it presents those respondents who were marginally more positive about the statement pointing out the purpose of provision was ‘to allow parents to go out to work.’

Principal Component Two (PC2) – *School preparation versus independence*

Looking beyond PC1, PC2 reveals a subtle contrast between respondents’ patterns of responses. Some were relatively more positive about the reasons that parents send their child to ECE settings being: to prepare them for school, children ‘can learn to read and write’, ‘get ready for school’, ‘parents can have a break’ and ‘parents can go out to work’. Others were relatively more positive about a set of reasons relating to the learning of independence, confidence and sharing.

5.6 Professionals’ views about factors that influence a child’s character and its development

This section consisted of 11 items and had missing data rate of 8%. The highest missing data rate was for the statement ‘The characters of the children at the nursery are influenced by nobody’ (34%), followed by ‘Influenced by people at a place of worship.’ (16%)

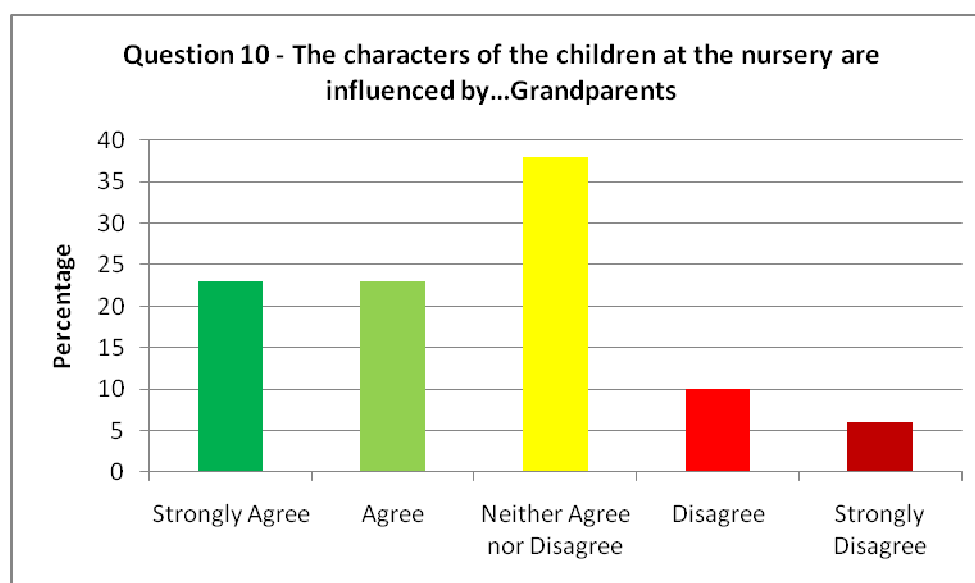
Mother, Father, Brother/Sister

The descriptive statistics showed that the majority of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that ‘Mother’ (74%), ‘Father’ (68%), and ‘Brother/Sister’ (61%) influence the characters of the children at the nursery. Other respondents neither agreed nor disagreed with these statements. These results showed lower levels of agreement than were found

among the parents' responses for these items, which were 98% for 'Mother', 94% for 'Father' and 83% for 'Brother/Sister'.

Grandparents, Other family members, Friends/Peers, Professionals at nursery

Although some respondents seemed to be positive (22% strongly agreed and 22% agreed) that grandparents influence children's characters, 38% of them neither agreed nor disagreed, 9% disagreed and 6% strongly disagreed. Similar patterns were observed in other relation to the responses about 'Other family members', 'Friends/Peers' and 'Professionals at nursery'.



People on TV, People at a place of worship

Respondents had a diverse view about TV as an influential factor. 32% of the respondents either strongly agreed or agreed, 34% neither agreed nor disagreed, and 31% either strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statement. A similar pattern was found for the factor, 'People at a place of worship'. Although the professionals' responses to family influences appear to show some confidence in their knowledge and understandings of these factors, these findings may highlight the need for research into professionals' knowledge about children's lives outside the setting and their 'funds of knowledge' (Gonzalez et al, 2005). Additionally, there may be scope for professional development activities and publications that disseminate the findings of research about children's engagement with and the influences of TV and religion.

Internet and Nobody

56 % respondents either strongly disagreed or disagreed that people or things on the Internet influence children's character. 19% neither agreed nor disagreed and 22% either agreed or strongly agreed. It is possible that the respondents believed or knew that the young children had few opportunities to access the Internet. Finally, 53% of respondents strongly disagreed that 'nobody' influences children's character. This statement appears to have been challenging, having the highest missing data rate (34%).

Based on Principal Component Analysis, two components were extracted. The component loadings can be found in Appendix 6.6a and 6.6b.

Principal Component One (PC1) – *General positiveness*

Principal Component Two (PC2) – *Primary influential factors versus secondary influential factors*

Looking beyond respondents' general positiveness on all the statements, there appears to be a subtle, contrasting view between a group of primary influential factors and a group of secondary influential factors. It shows some respondents are relatively more positive about a set of statements in relation to primary influential factors, for example, Father, Mother, Sisters/Brothers, Friends, and Professional at nursery. On the other hand other respondents were relatively more positive about a set of statements relating to secondary influential factors, for example, 'People or things on the Internet', 'People at a place of worship' and 'People on TV'.

5.7 Professionals' views on their own practice in the settings

There were 14 items in this section. The missing response rate was 7%. The highest missing data rate was for the statement 'The Early Years Foundation Stage supports children's character development' (16%).

'I usually set good examples for a child'; 'I usually encourage a child to tidy up.'

All respondents either strongly agreed or agreed about these two statements.

'I explain right and wrong to a child', 'I praise a child when s/he has done something good' and 'I talk to a child about others' feelings'

The majority of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed (94%) with the statement 'I explain right and wrong to a child' and a few of them (6%) neither agreed nor disagreed. Similar patterns were found in responses to the statements 'I praise a child when s/he has done something good' and 'I talk to a child about others' feelings'.

There was a marked shift in the extent of agreement from 'strongly agree' to 'agree' among the responses to the statement, 'I try to explain my feelings to a child'. Only 22% of respondents strongly agreed compared with 59% who agreed with the statement. 6% neither agreed nor disagreed and 3% strongly disagreed. Similar patterns were found among responses to the statements:

I introduce a child to other cultures

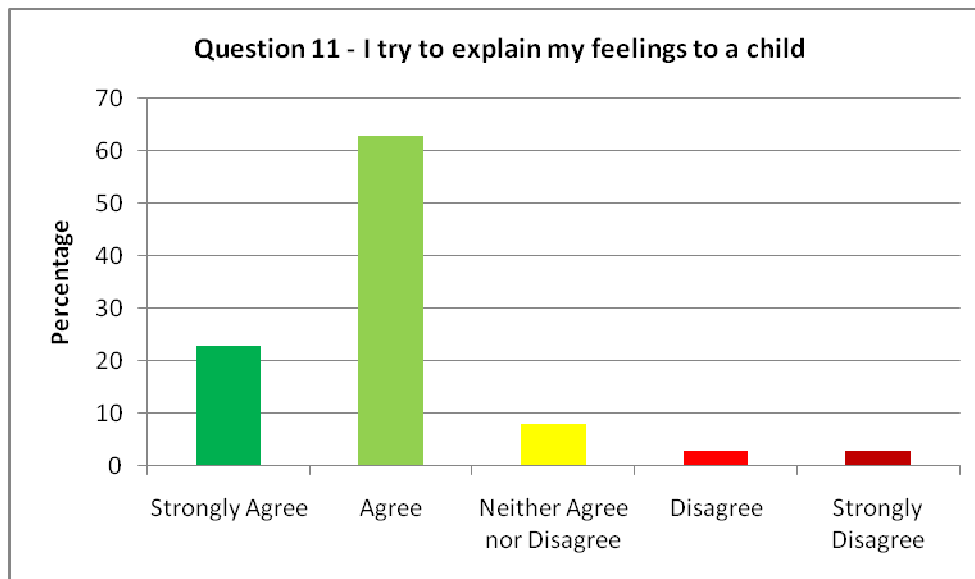
The Early Years Foundation Stage supports children's character development

I usually behave consistently when I interact with a child.

I usually talk to parents if I have any concerns about their child.

My views about child care are generally the same as other staff here.

My actions and words are intended to teach the children about values.
I read stories to a child every day.



It is possible that some of the respondents had difficulty answering these questions about their practice when faced with a questionnaire rather than opportunities for discussion. Raban et al (2007) have noted, for example, that 'through a process of guided reflection, participants are able to critically examine their current practice from a more informed position' (p.6) and may struggle to do so without support.

Finally, the majority of respondents either strongly disagreed (44%) or disagreed (44%) with the statement 'I find it hard to say sorry to a child'. 3% neither agreed nor disagreed and 3% agreed with it.

Using ordinal logistic regression, no model was found to fit into any variable in this set of data and no explanatory value component was extracted through PCA.

6. Appendices

Appendix 1 Consent form for participants (i) Parents

Learning for Life Early Years Project ☐ Parent / Carer Consent Form

I confirm that I have read the information about the Learning for Life project and understand what the research activities would involve **for me** and / or **my child**. I know that if I decide now that my child and / or I will take part, I can change my mind about this at any time by informing the researchers of this decision. On the basis of the information provided, I have made the following decisions:

Name (please print)

I agree / Do not agree

- | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | To take part in the Learning for Life Project; |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | To allow discussions / interviews to be tape recorded; |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | To data from a questionnaire or discussion being used for research; |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | To my data being included in research team discussions and analysis for the Learning for Life project as a whole; |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | To the possibility of my data, including anonymised quotes, being included in research reports, publications and presentations |

**Child's Participation: I (the above named) confirm that I am the legal guardian of.....
(please write your child's name), and**

I agree / do not agree

- | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | To the researchers including my child in the Learning for Life research project; |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | To the researchers gathering data from the setting for a mosaic approach; |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | To the researchers and other children in the nursery taking photographs of my child for research purposes NOT for publication; |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | To data collected with / about my child being included in research team discussions and analysis for the Learning for Life project as a whole; |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | To the researchers making video footage of my child at play only for research purposes NOT for publication or presentation outside the research team, except to me or people at my child's nursery during the course of the project. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | To data gathered with or about my child, including anonymised quotes, being included in research reports, publications and presentations. |

Signature: **Date:**

(2) Consent form for professionals

Learning for Life Early Years Project Professionals' Consent Form

I have read and understood the information about the letter outlining the details of the Learning for Life project exploring character development and values in early years settings and primary schools. I:

Please tick relevant boxes

My decision

Research Activity

Agree Do Not Agree

☐☐

To take part in this project.

Agree Do Not Agree

☐☐

To allow the discussions to be recorded.

Agree Do Not Agree

☐☐

To the data being used in internal research discussions.

Agree Do Not Agree

☐☐

To the data being used for academic or professional articles, seminars, and conferences.

I will maintain my right to opt out of the project at any time and for any reasons during the course of the project.

Name (please print):.....

Age group: ☐20-30 ☐30-40 ☐40-50

Signature: Date:.....

Appendix 2 The Children's Vignettes II-IV

The Children's Vignettes II

Tina's Story

"Don't put it there. I will tell you where to put, Dino.

Not there Dino... That's better."

Tina was 3 years and 7 month old when the researcher first met her in October 2008. The practitioner was slightly hesitant to identify Tina as a focus child. She said her concern was that Tina was not easy to talk to (because she moved around) and could also be very stubborn. Tina's early observation records are patchy. This was because they mainly consisted of records of her activity, and did not include much communication because she mostly ran around the garden, flitting here and there at great speed.

During a home visit and on other occasions, Tina's mum commented a few times that Tina was a strong child. The meaning of being strong appeared to be both physically and *"knowing what she wanted"*. One example she provided was *"Tina rode the bike downhill and speeding up...you know...she is fearless. Her sister won't even do it and will be very cautious. Tina is very different from her older sister...she is not like me and my husband when we were little."* Tina's confidence in her own abilities and physical strength were noted by the practitioners at her ECE setting as well (ps: T1).

Tina had been going to a playgroup in the same building as the ECE setting since she was 2 and a half years old so she was very familiar with the environment. Her mum mentioned that she had settled in very well when started to attend the ECE setting (September 2009).

Tina lived with her dad, mum and an older sister in a busy urban area. Both her parents were employed and worked from home. This afforded them the flexibility to take it in turns to take and collect the two girls from the setting. Both Tina's parents were noticeably concerned about the environment. Therefore, they did not like to use a car much. Where possible, they would either walk or cycle to take/pick up their children. This journey took roughly 15 minutes by bicycle.

Both Tina's parents expressed their opinions about how education should be. Tina's Dad was worried about the age at which children started to attend school (mostly

the year in which they turn 5), believing that it was much too early for them to begin 'formal education'. Both Tina's parents were actively involved in supporting the ECE setting by attending parents' evenings and other events that were organized. They also offered suggestions to the setting about possible events and activities. When she came home from her setting (and later from school) Tina usually played with her older sister. But there was no particular, regular routine since her parents were often busy at different times of the day.

Tina's strong characteristics showed through in the ways she expressed herself and the ways she interacted with other children. For example, Tina expressed what she wanted to do directly. At first glance, Tina could appear to be unkind to her friend (Sarah). It may be so. However, it is crucial to note what Tina said was a direct statement "*I don't want to sit next to you*" and did not necessarily mean unkindly. Yet her friend (Jake), seemed to take offence and copied it "*Don't sit next to me.*" After eating pancakes, Tina announced "*Enough pancakes*" and off she went to play. It was quite common that Tina spoke out loud about her feelings and actions.

Tina and Jack sat at the table and waited for pancakes. Another child, Sarah,¹⁷ came over and sat next to Tina. Tina stood up and walked over to sit next to Jack.

"I don't want to sit next to you" she said to Sarah.

Tina and Jack started to have a conversation and laughed together.

Jack: "Don't sit next to me" to Sarah.

....

Sarah: "My mum made pancake"

Tina "My mum does the same"

Sarah: "Me too."

Jack was pulling a face at Sarah.

After eating the pancake, the girls were playing with the empty plate together.

Tina: "Enough pancake"

Then she was off to play.

From some observation evidence, Tina showed her honesty and cooperation.

¹⁷ Since Sarah started the school, she often went away for long holidays. Children may not know her very well. On the other hand, Sarah was a very quiet and cautious girl.

Roger and Tina were building a house in the classroom.

Roger: "It's getting taller and taller."

Tina picked up a hair dryer left on the floor.

Roger to Tina "Can I have it?"

Tina: "I found it."

She did not want to give it to Roger.

One boy came over and said "It's mine."

Tina gave it to him.

Roger said to the boy: "Can I have it?"

The boy did not reply and then left. (L2, 3.3)

Wayne talked to the teacher: "Tina spits."

The teacher: "How do you tell her?"

Wayne: "Tina, I don't like you spit."

The teacher checked with Tina: "Tina, did you do that to Wayne?"

Tina 'Yes' (L2, 4.3)

Tina was observant. Although her mum emphasised her fearless and strong characteristics, she would show her awareness and cautiousness of new environments. From her key worker's records, 'when she first arrived she would move cautiously towards her peers as if assessing the situation before interacting with them.] (L2, 04.08)

Tina was cooperative when she played with her friends. She was able to initiate, share, negotiate, and compromise imaginative scripts during play (ps: T2). However, her particular friendship with Roger sometimes led her to interact with him in an accommodating manner. A practitioner described this in one of her own observation records (see below). The similar episode was also recorded in the researcher's observation data.

Tina played exclusively with Roger and sometimes denied other children any right to enter her play. Her feelings may be a little bruised should Roger decide to play with someone else. She would be in tears and come to ask adults' help to find him. (L2, 07.08)

PS:Tina's story

PS: T1

Practitioner's documents (L2, 04.08)

[She is physically confident at climbing, running etc...She knows her own mind and will never follow the crowd.]

PS: T2

Researcher observation (L2 14.2)

Tina played in cooperation with Sarah. She was able to initiate the script "I have an idea", follow Sarah's script "It's a cooker. Let's clean it..." (in bold type); however she initiated her new script (baby's birthday) and negotiated the development of it (in italics). She was also able to compromise and follow Sarah's script (underscored).

After lunch, children played outdoors. Becca and Tina were in the tree house.

Becca (B) invited Tina (T) to play

T "Ding-Dong"

B "The door is open"

T "I have an idea"

B "What idea?"

T "I get a stamp" She went out to get a board and pretended it was a stamp.

B "Yes" she followed

T "I can lit it."

B "Oh our cooker"

T "It's cooker. Let's clean it. It's a bit heavy, isn't it?"

Tina "The baby's birthday is today. Today is his birthday. We can blow the candle"

B "Let me clean it."

T "You can put the candle here [cooker]. It can be blue, red and green"

B "Let's..."

T "I see we can make a pattern with it."

B "Yes, we need more"

T "Actually, the baby is 5 today. baby is 5, isn't it?"

T "You put it like this. It's a bit tricky, isn't it?" Tina showed Sarah

Later Sarah got another piece.

B "Tina, would you like to have a try?"

T pointed out "Here, Sarah"

B "Let's do a trick Tina. I'm going to get an umbrella. It would rain on the cake."

T "I take the candle, you take the cake in."

The play continued

The Children's Vignettes III

Liam's Story

"They fish can't talk"

Liam was 3 years and 4 months old when he was first observed in his ECE setting. He was the youngest child in his cohort at setting and in his class when he transferred to school. Liam was confident in terms of speaking in front of a group (K1, 6.3-4), and assertive in protecting his playthings *"That's my one."* Liam was kind, for example, sharing puzzles with his friend Thomas *"I do the ladder one and you can do this bit"*. He was able to help his friend *"That goes there. I show you."* He also understood the idea of 'playing nicely' (practitioners' words) in the setting, and played cooperatively. However, an excerpt from his observation records show that Liam's behaviour towards his best friend, Tim, was unpredictable (not sharing as he did with Thomas, for example). His behaviour often changed depending on who played with him and with whom he himself chose to play.

Liam played with a jigsaw puzzle on the floor. The puzzle was half finished. The other boy (Tim) came over and took one piece away.

Liam said to him *"That's my one"*.

The practitioner noticed and asked *"Tim, do you want to do a puzzle? There are more there."* Tim walked away.

Another boy (Thomas) came over and looked at the puzzle, which Liam was doing. He took one piece and tried to fit it in place. But he did not quite figure out where the piece could go. There were two pieces left.

Liam took both of them and examined them carefully for a while. Then he said to Thomas, *"I do the ladder one and you can do this bit"* and then handed the piece over to Thomas.

Thomas tried to match the piece into the puzzle but was not able to find the right angle.

Liam: *"Erm...that goes there. I show you."*

The practitioner, who was watching, said *"That's very kind of you, Liam, letting Thomas join in."*

Liam said to Thomas *"Should we do another one?"*

They started to do the second puzzle.

Liam: *"You can have this bit."*

Thomas: *"This bit doesn't fit. Later Thomas left and Liam carried to play the puzzle."*(K1, 3.14-19)

In this excerpt, Tim (Liam's best friend) did not show any great interest in joining the play (his interest was only in taking a piece away), therefore Liam did not invite him to play. It was possible that Liam didn't feel like playing with Tim at that time (his keyworker said that Liam's reactions depended on his mood). Alternatively, Liam

may simply have wanted to do the puzzle on his own at that moment. Secondly, during the interactions, Liam seemed to like to lead the play. He constantly 'instructed' Thomas which piece of puzzles to take. In another observation, Liam showed an inclination to control the game, combined with his assertiveness and ability to negotiate and compromise between his own and others' interests (ps: L1).

At home, Liam played a lot with his older brother, Yuri. They enjoyed each other's company and liked to play with their pets. Every day, the two children were bathed by their mum who explained that, 'They love bath time'. But, sometimes Liam's play was slightly rough (e.g. kicking or splashing water at Yuri), so that Yuri would complain to his mum. However, both Liam's parents were very pleased that their 2 children got on well with each other.

Liam also had regular opportunities at the end of the day to play with children from his ECE setting. He lived with his family (dad, mum and older brother, Yuri (5-year-2-month in October 2008) in a renovated, historic house in a Kent village. Liam's Dad worked from home and his Mum (who had travelled a lot for her job before the birth of her first child) had recently returned to flexible, part-time employment, working at home for a former employer. Most of time, she would pick the children up from nursery and school. Since the parents around the village all knew each other they often shared the responsibility of collecting the children. This also meant that the children regularly played and had tea at each other's homes. At Liam's home, his mum would normally give the children a snack when they got in and then after their tea they sometimes played or watched TV and then later had a bath before going to bed at 7pm.

In the early part of the observation period (in Liam's case from September 2008), Liam and Tim played together a lot, often engaging in pretend fights and other rough and tumble play. Liam's mum felt that this stemmed from watching TV programmes that had fighting in them, such as 'Ben 10', which was a programme Liam liked. Towards the end of their time at the ECE setting together (May-July 2009) Liam's relationship with Tim had changed and their activities seemed to have 'cooled'. Evidently, as a result of the frequent incidences of fighting/hitting both in the setting and at home, the practitioners had written a letter to inform all parents that they were implementing a ban on 'fighting games' in the setting and advising parents to do the same at home. During this summer term, Liam's mum said that they seldom let Liam go over to Tim's house since this had happened.

When Liam moved to his (village) primary school, he was the youngest in his class. The last observation of Liam in reception class was when he was 4 year and 5 months old. He played a lot with other children in his class. The reception class teacher commented that he had settled very quickly and well. He was very observant and showed that he understood the consequences of different actions and could predict other's reactions. In the excerpt below from an observation record, he commented, "*Someone will cry*" when someone's work was damaged. He also clearly understood that crying could be associated with sadness.

Liam was playing with the puzzle and also observing things that happened around him.

"Who destroyed that?" Liam said and pointed to a pile of wooden building blocks spread out on the floor.

The researcher: "I don't know. Is it nice to do that?"

Liam: "No"

The researcher: "What will happen?"

Liam: "Somebody will cry" (K1, 3.22)

A boy was crying.

Liam looked at him and said "He is sad."

Another boy explained why, "He wanted to go outside" [but was not allowed] (K1, 5.5-6)

Despite Liam's confidence in his play, he seemed to be very different when he associated with people. At the home visit, Liam's parents mentioned,

'I found my two children are different when Liam was around 6 months; mainly the way they associate with people. Yuri (the older one) is very cuddly, and loving; talks to people and wants to know you, but Liam is different. He will just look at you. My mother-in-law lives in Norfolk. She is very good with children. Liam will not say goodbye and doesn't want to cuddle her. Liam is very reserved. He won't say much and sometimes plays me to make sure of my affection to him. He is confident but shy.' (Liam's mum).

Liam is very sensitive about what other people feel about him, [and he's] funny, quick witted and boisterous. (Liam's dad)

The practitioners in his ECE setting were also conservative about Liam's characteristics in terms of being loving, caring, kind and thoughtful to people.

He is the one who would snatch the things from others. If he wants something he will just take it from other people without asking them. And helpful? Erm, he is not very good at tidying up. I don't think he will try to get things for people while they are playing a game. If you ask him to do something, sometimes he will, but he may not do it immediately. Sometimes, if he feels he does not like it, he won't do it. You often need to ask him more than once...Again, sometimes he can be caring but another time he is not. He is one of those who really depend on what his mood is, which often some children are. On a good day he may want others to join in but sometimes, if he finishes with his toys, he might throw them away rather than let others have a go. You know. He is sort of a muddle; sometimes I just do whatever I want no matter what other people say, another day he will take more notice and he will be more into things. It is rather strange, in that way, that's what I see in him. (Practitioner Interview, K1, T2)

During the course of observation, there were a few records showing Liam's kindness, caring and helpfulness.

Tim and Liam were playing in the house.

Tim talked to the other child (a girl) "You are smelly. You can't come in."

Liam let her in and cuddled her back. (K1, 6.1-2)

May and Abir were arguing about marbles.

Abir: "I said I had the bigger one"

Liam picked a marble up and offered it to Abir.

Abir did not play with the marble. She left. (K1, 7.26)

At the final reception classroom observation, there were records showing Liam helped to tidy up attentively. Some records showed he tended to sit in the back row of the classroom (the teacher always asked him to come forward). Other records showed that he played exclusively with the older children and also did not easily comply with some rules (e.g. wearing apron when playing with water, following instructions in PE, carrying on doing his work while others all sat on the carpet ready for circle time).

As a whole, there was a strong sense that Liam tried to find a balance between asserting his autonomy and complying with those in positions of authority. But sometimes he appeared to act impulsively (e.g. taking the fish out of the tank, or not wanting to say sorry) and struggle to find a balance between following his own will and obeying certain rules.

PS: Liam's story:

ps: L1

ECE setting observation

Most of the children went to play outdoors. Only Liam and Mark stayed inside. They were playing with the train track.

Liam (L) "That one can't turn, Mark"

Mark (M) "Liam, can you fix this bloody thing?"

L "Should we put this ...?" ['We' discourse]

M "Should we put it under the bridge, it won't fall down."

L "Actually, that is the only one"

M "No look, the train going..."

L "Yes".

M "Should I do it under the bridge for you?... so try to do it under...Liam, the train comes now."

L "Train, it's a naughty car, isn't it?" [A new theme Liam developed]

M "Ithen we can play together, can't we? You can leave it there. Try it. Is it nice or bumpy?"

[While talking about the play, Mark pushed Liam's car away but soon brought it back].

L "This car is playing in the shed" [Liam did not always follow what Mark said. He played with the train track a little and then moved to the car]

M moved over to where Liam was playing.

L "Did you know about my cars?" [Liam then started to play car parking]

M snatched one of cars from L's car park and hid it behind his back "This is my car. You don't like red"

L had still got one red car "I do like red."

M "Should we park cars here?"

L "Should we line them up?"

L "You need a bus."

M "Should I get the bus in it?"

L "We need that one. Don't we? That doesn't fit, isn't it? That's a fat one"

M "Shall we?"

L "We need, don't we?"

M "Liam, pretending that"

L "Pretend that is xxx, isn't it?"

M 'Move home, take that stinky car away'

L "Take that stinky one away."

They started to count.

M: [1,2,3]

L: [1,2,3,4,5]

L "Don't take this. They are mine. I'll get more cars than you."

M "Liam they are our cars. Should we line them up?"

L "Should we....."

M put the cars up on the roof of the car park: "That one goes up on the roof." [The red car which Liam was playing with]

L: "That is my one"

Another boy came in (James) and talked to Mark

"I thought you are going to meet us outside."

Mark "Can I just have some peace and quiet with Liam?"

James "After that, you meet us outside straight away."

James left.

M to L "Liam do you want to go outside?"

L "No"

M left. A few seconds later, he came back to ask L again

"Liam, do you want to go outside"

L 'NO' he did not look at M and did not show any rejection at M's leaving.

M left.

L carried on playing with the cars and car park. After he finished it, he started to put his shoes back on. He was struggling but did not ask the adults to help. Having succeeded, he went outside to play.

The Children's Vignettes IV

Jacob's Story

*An adult asked Jacob about the picture he drew on a Christmas card "What is it?"
He had a look the card and went back to do what he was doing without responding.*

Jacob was 4 years old when the researcher first met him in October 2008. At this time, he had only been attending the setting for two months. Most of time, he only stayed for the morning session but there were two days when he stayed until 3:30

He lived with mum, dad and older brother Jack in London where their three-storey semi-detached house is located. Both parents are White British. Dad works full-time and mum is a full-time parent. Recently she started to do some part-time work. Jacob's ECE setting (and later infant school reception class) and his brother's junior school are all located near their house. Every day his mum takes them and picks them up. It only takes 2 minutes to walk home. His mum mentioned that they were pondering the idea of sending both children to private school after Jack finishes at junior school.

Jacob's Mum said that she had chosen to send him to his ECE setting because the children of a friend also went there. Having looked around, she said they had liked the way the setting operated and agreed that Jacob would go there

From the observation records, Jacob often played with Roger or Edward. Sometimes, he walked around the classroom, looking a little bored. Every time the researcher was there, he and Roger would come over to chat and draw in her notepad. But Jacob did not talk much. Most of time, it was Roger who talked to the researcher.

At the end of their day in the setting, the children often played with friends or took part in different activities. If not, Jacob's mum prepared tea for them and then Jacob would play with Jack. They often played together. They shared a room and played lots of game in the room too. Their room was rather spacious. There was an extra high ceiling and huge window. After 7 pm, they would go to bed. They might not see their daddy every day since by the time he came home from work they were usually in bed. Mum and dad would then eat their evening meal together.

At his setting, Jacob was a quiet boy. A practitioner commented that *"is very economic about his words"* (L3, practitioner interview). He often observed the

situations before participating in an activity or simply he chose not to take part His quietness and lack of initiatives in engaging an activity or approaching people (mainly adults) sometimes gave an impression that he was not confident in this respect. However, the data showed that this was not necessarily the case. He simply preferred to work at his own pace and communicate when he felt the need to do so, as the practitioners observed:

‘He is confident. He may not choose things [to do]. I don’t’ think he did not choose things to do because he can’t, I think it is because he chooses not to...He takes his time to do things..... He is independent. He thought about things and acted upon. And actually, he is not easily led; although he can be social he doesn't run with the pack. He knows his own mind.’ (Interview, L3, T1)

‘If Jacob could not do a thing or it failed, even it failed but in the beginning he though he can do it, it does not bother him. I would think he is confident.’ (Interview, L3, T3)

He has an 8-year-old brother, Jack. He often played and played well with his brother and his brother’s friends outside of the school and at home. His mum mentioned:

Jacob gets on better with girls. He also played well with some of Jack’ friends. Usually, when children played a little rough, he will hold back and doesn’t want it. He is the oldest in the year group. He may think other younger children are little baby. (Home visit, L3.2)

In the observation in his reception class, the example showed that Jacob did not seem to assert his own rights and engage with conflicts.

Jacob, Lily and children played castle game, built horses and constructed an imaginative story together at the table. The play continued.

Thomas came over to the table but tried to grab the horses that Jacob and girls were playing.

Lily: “Thomas, you will break it.”

Thomas still carried on grabbing it.

Jacob stood up and left. Lily followed.

Both went to do drawing. (Reception observation)

In another example, he appeared to deal with some situations in a passive way.

Children played in different areas. Jacob and Lily played in the home corner. A girl tried to play with them. After a while, Jacob and Lily left and went to read the book together. The girl then followed and had a look what they were reading and then left. Jacob and Lily moved to draw pictures together. After a while, the girl came again to see what they were drawing and brought over a pen. Jacob

dropped the pen into the gap between the table and wall. (He did not seem to like the participation of the other girl.). The girl left. Later Jacob started to walk around and observed what other children were doing.

Jacob appeared to show slightly detached, reserved or aloof from the situations or people. When discussing with the practitioners about Jacob's characteristics e.g. caring, kind, thoughtful, helpful or responsible, they have a consistent response.

[If you ask him] "Are you ok?" "I am ok" [he said]. [It feels like that] I am not going to disturb your equilibrium. I am not going to do anything to make you upset but neither am I going to particularly caring or empathetic or anything. It doesn't bother him. Some children get very upset when others cry. With Jacob, I don't think he doesn't notice but just none of his business.....He is neither kind nor unkind, is absolutely in the middle...Regarding responsible, you don't need to remind him the task. He will follow through it. But would he see it as voluntary, almost certainly not, so if you give him the responsibility, he is very much happy to shoulder it. But I don't think he thinks a lot of things are his responsibility, (Interview, T1)

Sometimes he came and said 'xxx is crying' [the practitioner demonstrated Jacob's posture and body language and plain voice]. You know, he looked very cool and very detached. He is not very emotional. He very rarely cries. If he cries, it must be very serious. (Interview, T3).

The observation data also demonstrated that he sometimes did not seem to be attentive to the situations. For example, in the morning Colin invited him to work together but Jacob soon forgot and went to do work on his own.

Finally, the mum's comparison between Jacob's brother (Jack) and Jacob may enhance our understanding about Jacob.

'Jack is very emotionally sensitive. They both are very different. Jack has stronger ideas about doing things he wanted, to initiate....May be Jacob has less of that. He followed a lot of his brothers' friends. Jack has a strong sense of what is right/wrong, or good/bad. He will make sure he is doing the right thing. "I am a good child" which is so important to him. For Jacob, it may not be that strong. Jacob is more relaxed. Although the rules are there, he will try to do what he wants and get around it.' (Home visit, L3)

Appendix 3 Parent questionnaire (*modified layout for this report**)

The questions below concern your child who attends:.....

1. My child (*who attends the nursery*) is a: Girl ☐ Boy ☐

2. My child's month and year of birth is:

3. My child has.....(*please insert number*) brothers / sisters

4. My child started going to this nursery in (*month / year*)

In the next section, parents were asked to respond to statements 5, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, and 14 by ticking a box that best reflected their attitude to the items from a choice of: **Strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, strongly disagree*

5. My child attends the nursery so that: (*Please tick the boxes that best match your opinion*)

<input type="checkbox"/> I can go out to work	<input type="checkbox"/> (S)he can become more independent
<input type="checkbox"/> I can have a break	<input type="checkbox"/> (S)he can learn to be well behaved
<input type="checkbox"/> (S)he can meet other children	<input type="checkbox"/> (S)he can learn to share
<input type="checkbox"/> (S)he can learn to read/write	<input type="checkbox"/> (S)he can learn to be responsible
<input type="checkbox"/> (S)he can get ready for school	<input type="checkbox"/> (S)he can learn to be confident
<input type="checkbox"/> (S)he can learn respect	<input type="checkbox"/> Other reasons (please give details)
<input type="checkbox"/> (S)he can learn good manners	<input type="checkbox"/> Other reasons (please give details)

6. My own age is in the following age bracket:

☐ 15 to 20 ☐ 21 to 30 ☐ 31 to 40 ☐ 41 to 50 ☐ 51 to 60 ☐ 61 or above

7. I am: ☐ Female ☐ Male

8. I am: ☐ unemployed ☐ employed full-time ☐ full-time parent / carer
☐ student ☐ employed part-time ☐ part-time parent / carer

9. Please tick the boxes to tell us about your child NOW.

☐ Shares / takes turns ☐ Is happy

Is kind	Is caring / loving
Is polite / has good manners	Is naughty
Is helpful	Is thoughtful
Is truthful / honest	Is shy
Is funny / humorous	Other <i>(please give details)</i>
Is curious / inquisitive	Other <i>(please give details)</i>
Is selfish	Other <i>(please give details)</i>

10. Please tick the boxes to tell us what you hope your child will be like AS AN ADULT.

Fun loving	Religious	Selfish
Happy	Confident	Hard-working
Kind	Caring / loving	Responsible
Honest	Successful	Other <i>(please give details)</i>
Respectful to others	Well educated	Other <i>(please give details)</i>

11. Please tick the boxes to tell us how much you agree with these statements. You can add your own comments at the bottom if you wish.

In general, a child's character

Is obvious from a few weeks of age	Will be different when (s)he is an adult
Is the same at 2 years as at 1 year old	Is fully developed before starting school
Changes as (s)he gets older	Has aspects that can't be changed
Changes from one day to the next	Is shaped by people around him/her
Is inherited from its parent(s)	Other <i>(please give details)</i>
Is unique	Other <i>(please give details)</i>

12. Please tick the boxes to tell us how much you agree with the following statements. You can add your own comments at the bottom if you wish.

A 'good' person is someone who is...

Respectful to others	Caring
Happy	Hard-working
Kind	Well educated
Honest	Selfish
Fun loving	Successful
Religious	Responsible
Confident	Other (<i>please give details</i>)

13. Please tick the boxes to tell us how much you agree with the following statements.

The following people influence my child's values...

Self / mother	Teachers/staff at my child's nursery
Self / father	People on TV
Sisters / brothers	People / things on the Internet
Grandparents	People at a place of worship
Other family members	Nobody influences my child's values
My child's friends	Other (<i>please give details</i>)

14. Please tick the boxes to tell us how much you agree with the following statements.

I usually set good examples for my child	I talk to my child about others' feelings
My child copies my words and actions	I introduce my child to other cultures
I find it hard to say 'sorry' to my child	I spend 'quality time' with my child
I try to explain my feelings to my child	I often try to read or tell stories or sing to my child
My child must sit at the table for meals	I explain that snatching toys is wrong
I explain right and wrong to my child	My views about parenting are generally the same as other parents I know
My child doesn't know when I'm sad	Other (<i>please give details</i>)

15. Please tell us about your child's and your own ethnic background by ticking the boxes.

You	Your child			You	Your child
✓	✓			✓	✓
		Bangladeshi	White British		
		Black African	White Irish		
		Black Caribbean	Any other Asian background		
		Chinese	Any other Black background		
		Indian	Any other Mixed background		
		Mixed White and Asian	Any other White background		
		Mixed White and Black African	Prefer not to state		
		Mixed White and Black Caribbean	Other (<i>please give details below</i>)		
		Pakistani			

16. Please tell us about your child's and your own religion by ticking the boxes.

You	Your child	
✓	✓	
		Catholicism (Roman Catholic)
		Church of England (Anglican)
		Hinduism (Hindu)
		Islam (Muslim)
		Judaism (Jew)
		Other Christian (Methodist, Baptist, United Reformist)
		Sikhism (Sikh)
		None
		Other (<i>please state</i>):

17. Please tell us how many sessions per week your child attends the nursery named on page 1

– Please note a session is a morning or afternoon. A whole day is 2 sessions, full week is 10 sessions (please write the number of sessions in the box)

18. Besides the nursery and you, does anyone else usually look after your child? ☐ Yes ☐ No

(e.g. childminder, nanny, family or friend, another nursery)

19. Please tell us your postcode (this is confidential to our research)

20. Please tell us your highest qualification (e.g. GCSE, Certificate, University degree)

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR HELP

Please return your questionnaire to your child's nursery or directly to us in the freepost envelope.

Appendix 4 Professional questionnaire (*modified layout for this report**)

To answer the questions, please tick or write information in the boxes as instructed. If you do not know the answer, please leave it blank and move on.

1. I am: Female ☐ Male ☐

2. I work at the nursery: ☐ part-time ☐ full-time

3. My job title is:

4. My age is: ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

15 to 21 to 31 to 41 to 51 to 61 or
20 30 40 50 60 above

** The professionals were asked to respond to statements 5, 6, 8, 9 and 11 by ticking a box that best reflected their attitude to the items from a choice of: **Strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, strongly disagree***

5. In your opinion, the main purposes of the provision at your nursery are...

To allow parents to go out to work	To help children become more independent
To give parents a break	To help children learn to be well behaved
To allow children to meet other children	To help children learn to share
To allow children to learn to read/write	To help children learn to be responsible
To help children get ready for school	To help children learn to be confident
To help children to learn respect	Other purposes (<i>please give details</i>)
To help children to learn good manners	

6. Parents send their children to the nursery where you work so that...

They can go out to work	Their child becomes more independent
They can have a break	Their child learns to be well behaved
Their child can meet other children	Their child learns to share
Their child can learn to read/write	Their child learns to be responsible
Their child can get ready for school	Their child learns to be confident
Their child can learn respect	Other reasons <i>(please give details)</i>
Their child can learn good manners	

8. A good person is someone who is...

Respectful to others	Hard-working
Happy	Well educated
Kind	Selfish
Honest	Responsible
Fun loving	Successful
Religious	Fair
Confident	Other qualities <i>(please give details)</i>
Caring	

9. In general, a child's character...

Is obvious from a few weeks of age	Is fully developed before starting school
Is the same at 2 years as at 1 year old	Has aspects that can't be changed
Changes as (s)he gets older	Is shaped by people around him/her
Changes from one day to the next	Affects the way (s)he learns
Is inherited from its parent(s)	Is affected by what (s)he learns
Is unique	Is different at home and at nursery
Will be different when (s)he is an adult	Other features <i>(please give details)</i>

11. Please tell us how much you agree with these statements

I usually set good examples for a child	I talk to a child about others' feelings
I praise a child when s/he has done something good	I usually talk to parents if I have any concerns about their child
I find it hard to say 'sorry' to a child	I introduce a child to other cultures
I try to explain my feelings to a child	My views about child care are generally the same as other staff here
I usually encourage a child to tidy up	I read stories to a child everyday
I explain right and wrong to a child	The Early Years Foundation Stage supports children's character development
I usually behave consistently when I interact with a child	My actions and words are intended to teach the children about values
	Other ideas (<i>please give details</i>)

**The professionals were asked to respond to statements 7 and 10 by ticking a box that best reflected their attitude to the items statements from a choice of: All of them, most of them, some of them, a few of them, none of them*

7. The children in the nursery.....

Share / take turns	Are happy
Are kind	Are caring / loving
Are polite / have good manners	Are naughty
Are helpful	Are thoughtful
Are truthful / honest	Are confident
Are funny / humorous	Are independent
Are curious / inquisitive	Are responsible
Are selfish	Are cooperative
	Other qualities (<i>please give details</i>)

10. The characters of the children at the nursery are influenced by...

Mother	Professionals at nursery
Father	People on TV
Sisters / brothers	People / things on the Internet
Grandparents	People at a place of worship
Other family members	Nobody
Friends / peers	Other people / things <i>(please give details)</i>

12. Please tell us about your ethnic background *(put a tick in the appropriate box)*

Bangladeshi	<input type="checkbox"/>	Any other Asian background	<input type="checkbox"/>	White British	<input type="checkbox"/>
Black African	<input type="checkbox"/>	Any other Black background	<input type="checkbox"/>	White Irish	<input type="checkbox"/>
Black Caribbean	<input type="checkbox"/>	Mixed White and Asian	<input type="checkbox"/>	Any other White background	<input type="checkbox"/>
Chinese	<input type="checkbox"/>	Mixed White and Black African	<input type="checkbox"/>	Prefer not to state	<input type="checkbox"/>
Indian	<input type="checkbox"/>	Mixed White and Black Caribbean	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other <i>(please give details below)</i>	
Pakistani	<input type="checkbox"/>	Any other Mixed background	<input type="checkbox"/>		

13. Please tell us about your religion *(put a tick in the appropriate box)*

Catholicism (Roman Catholic)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Judaism (Jew)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Prefer not to state	<input type="checkbox"/>
Church of England (Anglican)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sikhism (Sikh)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other <i>(please give details)</i>	
Hinduism (Hindu)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other Christian (Methodist, Baptist, United Reformist)	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Islam (Muslim)	<input type="checkbox"/>	None	<input type="checkbox"/>		

14. Please tell us your highest qualification *(e.g. GCSE, NVQ, Certificate, University degree)*

--

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR HELP

Please return your completed questionnaire in the freepost envelope provided.

Appendix 5 Parents' questionnaire statistical Analysis

Appendix 5.1a

Principal Component (PC1)

Eigenvalue 4.0 Component loadings

Statements	Component loading
My child is kind.	0.79
My child is polite.	0.74
My child is helpful	0.69
My child is honest.	0.67
My child is caring.	0.60
My child is funny.	0.57
My child is thoughtful.	0.56
My child is curious.	0.56
My child shares.	0.55
My child is happy.	0.50

Appendix 5.1b

Principal Component Two (PC2)

Eigenvalue 1.7 Component loadings

Statements	Component loading
My child is naughty.	0.60
My child is caring.	0.46
My child is curious.	0.42
My child is funny.	0.41
My child is happy.	0.39
My child is (not) shy.	0.38
My child is kind.	-0.11
My child is polite.	-0.28
My child is honest.	-0.28
My child is helpful.	-0.31
My child shares.	-0.34
My child is (not) selfish	-0.39

Appendix 5.2a

Principal Component One (PC1)

Eigenvalue 5.1 Component loadings

Statements	Component loading
I hope (s)he is honest.	0.84
I hope (s)he is kind.	0.83
I hope (s)he is happy.	0.77
I hope (s)he is caring and loving.	0.76
I hope (s)he is respectful.	0.75
I hope (s)he is confident.	0.73
I hope (s)he is responsible.	0.63
I hope (s)he is fun-loving.	0.54
I hope (s)he is well-educated.	0.51
I hope (s)he is hard-working.	0.50
I hope (s)he is successful.	0.45
I hope s(h)e is not selfish.	0.30

Appendix 5.2b

Principal Component Two (PC2)

Eigenvalue 2.0 Component loadings

Statements	Component loading
I hope (s)he is successful.	0.74
I hope (s)he is well-educated.	0.63
I hope (s)he is religious.	0.52
I hope (s)he is hard-working.	0.51
I hope (s)he is responsible.	0.26
I hope (s)he is selfish.	0.24
I hope (s)he is confident.	0.11
I hope (s)he is happy.	-0.26
I hope (s)he is respectful.	-0.26
I hope (s)he is honest.	-0.27
I hope (s)he is caring and loving.	-0.28
I hope (s)he is kind.	-0.30

Appendix 5.3a

Principal Component One (PC1)

Eigenvalue 5.3 Component loadings

Statements	Component loading
A good person is hard-working.	0.83
A good person is confident.	0.82
A good person is fun-loving.	0.80
A good person is responsible.	0.77
A good person is happy.	0.76
A good person is well-educated.	0.73
A good person is successful.	0.69
A good person is religious.	0.64
A good person is kind.	0.62
A good person is caring.	0.61
A good person is honest.	0.58
A good person is respectful.	0.53

Appendix 5.3b

Principal Component Two (PC2)

Eienvalue 2.6 Component loadings

Statements	Component loading
A good person is honest.	0.65
A good person is respectful.	0.57
A good person is caring.	0.55
A good person is kind.	0.54
A good person is responsible.	0.22
A good person is confident.	-0.26
A good person is religious.	-0.40
A good person is well-educated.	-0.44
A good person is successful.	-0.50
A good person is selfish.	-0.56

Appendix 5.4

Frequency counts and mean scores of parents' views on character development

In general, a child's character...	1 Strongly agree (count)	2 Agree	3 Neither agree nor disagree	4 Disagree	5 Strongly disagree	Mean score
Is obvious from a few weeks of age	13	41	32	62	24	3.3
Is the same at 2 years as at 1 year old	3	23	30	92	25	3.7
Changes as s(h)e gets older	54	100	14	8	1	1.9
Changes from one day to the next	12	38	43	68	11	3.1
Is inherited from her/his parent(s)	17	62	67	23	3	2.6
Is unique	72	73	21	6	0	1.8
Will be different when s(h)e is an adult	20	58	68	27	2	2.5
Is fully developed before starting school	14	30	37	79	14	3.3
Has aspects that can't be changed	15	72	35	41	13	2.8
Is shaped by people around her/him	45	102	21	5	1	1.9

Appendix 5.5

Eigenvalue 2.0 Component loadings

Statement: In general a child's character...	Component loading
Changes as s(h)e gets older.	0.78
Will be different when s(h)e is an adult.	0.64
Changes from one day to the next.	0.54
Is shaped by people around her/him.	0.34
Is obvious from a few weeks of age.	-0.24
Has aspects that can't be changed.	-0.35
Is the same at 2 years as at 1 year old.	-0.50

Appendix 5.6a

Principal component one (PC1)

Eigenvalue 4.8 Component loadings

Statements	Component loading
(s)he can learn respect.	0.88
(s)he can learn to be well behaved.	0.88
(s)he can learn good manners.	0.87
(s)he can learn to be responsible.	0.75
(s)he can learn to share.	0.72
(s)he can learn to be confident.	0.68
(s)he can become more independent.	0.61
(s)he can get ready for school.	0.48
(s)he can learn to read and write.	0.47
(s)he can meet other children.	0.22

Appendix 5.6b

Principal Component Two (PC2)

Eigenvalue 1.2 Component loadings

Statements	Component loading
(s)he can meet other children.	0.63
I can have a break.	0.55
(s)he can become more independent.	0.44
(s)he can learn to be confident.	0.25
(s)he can get ready for school.	-0.13
(s)he can learn good manners.	-0.21
(s)he can learn to read and write.	-0.43

Appendix 5.7

Frequency counts and mean scores of parents' responses to factors that influence a child's character and development

My child's character is influenced by...	1 Strongly agree (count)	2 Agree	3 Neither agree nor disagree	4 Disagree	5 Strongly disagree	Mean score
Self/ mother	138	35	2	1	1	1.3
Self/ father	128	38	5	3	2	1.4
Sisters/ brothers	80	55	19	4	4	1.8
Grandparents	68	79	16	8	4	1.9
Other family members	42	89	32	6	2	2.1
My child's friends	44	103	23	4	1	1.9
Teachers/ Staff at my child's nursery	67	92	13	3	1	1.7
People at TV	14	79	55	18	6	2.6
People/ things on the internet	12	42	60	35	21	3.1
People at a place of worship	17	44	69	19	16	2.8
Nobody influences my child's values	7	9	15	48	87	4.2

Appendix 5.8

Principal Component

Eigenvalue 3.4 Component loadings

Statements	Component loading
I explain right and wrong to my child.	0.71
I talk to my child about others' feelings.	0.68
I spend quality time with my child.	0.65
I often try to read or tell stories or sing to my child.	0.64
I try to explain my feelings to my child.	0.62
I explain that snatching toys is wrong.	0.58
I usually set good examples.	0.50
My child copies my words and actions.	0.47
I introduce my child to other cultures.	0.36
My child doesn't know when I am sad.	-0.29
I find it hard to say 'sorry' to my child.	-0.36

Appendix 6 Professionals' questionnaire statistical analysis

Appendix 6.1 Principal Component

Eigenvalue 7.7 Component loadings

The children in the nursery...	Component loading
Share/ take turns	0.69
Are kind	0.80
Are polite/ have good manners	0.90
Are helpful	0.90
Are truthful/ honest	0.50
Are funny/ humorous	0.59
Are curious	0.38
Are (not) selfish	0.45
Are happy	0.72
Are caring/ loving	0.76
Are (not) naughty	0.60
Are thoughtful	0.60
Are confident	0.74
Are independent	0.71
Are responsible	0.57
Are cooperative	0.90

Appendix 6.2 Principal Component

Eigenvalue 4.9 Component loadings

A good person is someone who is...	Component loading
Kind	0.91
Honest	0.90
Caring	0.86
Respectful to others	0.84
Well educated	0.76
Fair	0.69
Responsible	0.65
(Not) Selfish	0.53
Religious	-0.30
Hard-working	-0.33
Successful	-0.15

Appendix 6.3 Principal Component

Eigenvalue 3.0 Component loadings

In general, a child's character...	Component Loading
Change as (s)he gets older	0.60
Is shaped by people around him/her	0.49
Is affected by what (s)he learns	0.49
Is different at home and at nursery	0.43
Affects the way (s)he learns	0.35
Will be different when (s)he is an adult	0.35
Is fully developed before starting school	-0.63
Is obvious from a few weeks of age	-0.75
Is the same at 2 years as at 1 year old	-0.82

Appendix 6.4a

Principal component one (PC1)

Eigenvalue 6.2 Component loadings

Parents send their children to the nursery where you work so that...	Component loading
Their child learns to share	0.92
Their child can learn good manners	0.88
Their child can learn to be confident	0.88
Their child can learn to be responsible	0.87
Their child becomes more independent	0.86
Their child learns to be well behaved	0.82
Their child can learn respect	0.79
Their child can meet other children	0.65
Their child can get ready for school	0.50
They can have a break	0.48

Appendix 6.4b

Principal Component Two (PC2)

Eigenvalue 1.7 Component loadings

In your opinion, the main purposes of the provision at your nursery are...	Component loading
To allow parents to go out to work	0.73
To give parents a break	0.60
To help children to learn respect	-0.15
To help children learn to share	-0.18
To allow children become more independent	-0.20
To help children learn to be confident	-0.42
To help children learn to be responsible	-0.50

Appendix 6.5a

Principal Component One (PC1)

Eigenvalue 5.9 Component loadings

In your opinion, the main purposes of the provision at your nursery are...	Component loading
To allow children become more independent	0.85
To help children to learn good manners	0.80
To help children learn to share	0.79
To help children learn to be confident	0.79
To allow children to meet other children	0.78
To help children to learn respect	0.72
To help children to be well behaved	0.72
To help children get ready for school	0.66
To give parents a break	0.64
To help children learn to be responsible	0.61
To allow parents to go out to work	0.53
To allow children to learn to read/write	0.39
To allow parents to go to work	-0.15

Appendix 6.5b

Principal Component Two (PC2)

Eigenvalue 1.7 Component loadings

In your opinion, the main purposes of the provision at your nursery are...	Component loading
To allow parents to go out to work	0.73
To give parents a break	0.60
To allow children to learn to read/write	0.48
To help children get ready for school	0.18
To help children to learn respect	-0.15
To help children learn to share	-0.18
To allow children become more independent	-0.20
To help children learn to be confident	-0.42
To help children learn to be responsible	-0.50

Appendix 6.6a

Principal Component One (PC1)

Eigenvalue 6.4 Component loadings

The characters of the children at the nursery are influenced by...	Component Loading
Sisters/ brothers	0.93
Other family members	0.91
Grandparents	0.90
Friends/ peers	0.87
Father	0.85
Mother	0.81
Professionals at nursery	0.81
People on TV	0.67
People at a place of worship	0.56
People / things on the internet	0.41

Appendix 6.6b**Principal Component Two** Eigenvalue 2.4 Component Loadings

The Characters of the children at the nursery are influenced by	Component Loading
People / things on the internet	0.85
People at a place of worship	0.69
People on TV	0.30
Sisters/ brothers	-0.14
Professionals at nursery	-0.27
Friends/ Peers	-0.29
Mother	-0.30
Father	-0.33

Appendix 6.7a Principal Component One (PC1)

Eigenvalue 6.4 Component loadings

The characters of the children at the nursery are influenced by	Component Loading
Sisters/ brothers	0.93
Other family members	0.91
Grandparents	0.90
Friends/ peers	0.87
Father	0.85
Mother	0.81
Professionals at nursery	0.81
People on TV	0.67
People at a place of worship	0.56
People / things on the internet	0.41

Appendix 6.7b Principal Component Two (PC2)

Eigenvalue 2.4 Component Loadings

The Characters of the children at the nursery are influenced by	Component Loading
People / things on the internet	0.85
People at a place of worship	0.69
People on TV	0.30
Sisters/ brothers	-0.14
Professionals at nursery	-0.27
Friends/ Peers	-0.29
Mother	-0.30
Father	-0.33

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